

COMPLETE NOVELETTE BY ANDREW SOUTAR

APRIL-1912  
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# AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS



WHEN CUPID WAITS

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MAN WHITAKER

MARGARETTA TUTTLE  
ANNA ALICE CHADIN

NALBRO BARTLEY  
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# This Present Ainslee's

The contents of this present number of AINSLEE'S can speak to you more convincingly of the coming number than we could possibly write about it in any announcement.

Here you have "Penitence Island," a complete novelette by Andrew Soutar. Do you find it thoroughly entertaining, with a really big situation beneath the surface? Would it occur to you that its author might be able to weave a series of present-day adventure yarns around a quixotic young Hercules which would compare in charm, characterization and vividness of action with "The Broad Highway"? We think that in "The Marquis," the first story of which will appear in the May AINSLEE'S, Mr. Soutar has written such a series. But do not depend upon our judgment. It will be safer for you to draw your own conclusions for the novelette you have at hand.

Margareta Tuttle's short story in this AINSLEE'S is, in our opinion, well qualified to speak for the same author's novelette, "In His Own House," to be printed complete in the May issue.

To hear from us that Anna Alice Chapin's next story, "The Scratch Company," is exquisite, would not be one half so convincing as to read "Rufus of the Birds" in this present AINSLEE'S. Let Thomas P. Byron's "The Frightened Enigma," speak for his new story, "Kid Pink and the Maharaja." Base your expectations of Owen Oliver's May contribution upon his present one. "The Blood Brother" will give you a good idea of the dramatic qualities to be found in Nalbro Bartley's "Dead Man's Keep." "Straight-Rye Jones" may be taken as an indication of the literary quality of F. Berkeley Smith's "Undine," while "The Boss of Blattenburg"—but no, you will have to go back to "St. Anthony's Vision," or some of Mr. Addison's lighter stories in order to get a forecast of the droll humor and pathos of Sally Bunn.

Marie Van Vorst, Joseph C. Lincoln and some others whose stories you have read in this number do not appear in May. But if you have enjoyed them isn't it likely that you will enjoy equally the stories by Kate Jordan, Margaret Cameron, Wells Hastings and others in the coming number?

We honestly believe that you will find the May AINSLEE'S—But read this April AINSLEE'S and judge for yourself.

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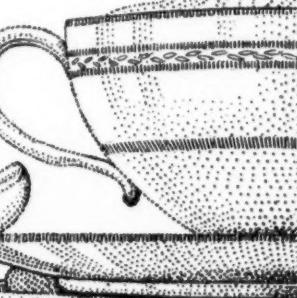
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# AINSLEE'S

VOL. XXIX.

APRIL, 1912.

No. 3.



## CHAPTER I.

SIR ROBERT CHESNEY did not approach the subject with the tact or delicacy which the temperament of the Honorable Betty demanded; he simply blundered into the fray, seeking to emphasize his warnings by stabbing viciously at an empty snuffbox. After all, he was her legal guardian, and a guardian—as Betty, with great reluctance, had several times confessed—has all the privileges of a parent without the natural sympathy.

"I hoped," he said sorrowfully, "that the rank and social position of the Honorable Rupert Todd would entitle him to respect in my house, but the daughter of my lifelong friend seems to forget where privilege ends and license begins."

The Honorable Betty pouted; there was a suspicion of twinkle in her eyes.

"Did I hurt his feelings *very* much?" she asked contritely.

"I thought you were rude—positively rude to him. Heaven alone knows what's in his mind at the present moment."

The Honorable Betty affected a yawn.

"Yes," she sighed, "I don't suppose that anything mundane could discover it."

"There you go again, Betty!" Sir Robert closed the lid of the snuffbox with an impatient snap. "Have you no sense of decorum? Do you breakfast on vitriol?"

"I wish it were possible without injuring the digestion." Her face was as grave as that of an owl. "I should love to be able to tell some persons exactly what I thought of them. The English language is so horribly vague at the very moment when one desires to be most expressive."

"Some women take advantage of their sex," said Sir Robert bitingly. "Their punishment ought to be a week of—of—"

"Of what?"

"They ought to be men for a week," he blurted, "so that other men might have an opportunity of teaching them good manners."

The Honorable Betty sighed despairingly.

"And all this for answering a man as he deserved to be answered! 'You're only a girl!' Did you hear him say that, Sir Robert? And to the woman whom he has come over to woo!"

"I heard your reply. That was enough for me to think about. 'Every girl is a woman the moment after she has been kissed by a man who meant it!' Good heavens! What could he think of you? What could he think of

me? Where can he think you have been brought up? Who can he think has kissed you to give you that idiotic sentiment?"

"I'm afraid that you're taxing his brain power, guardy, dear. The Honorable Rupert couldn't possibly think of all that at once. Why, he told me that it 'fagged' him to swear at his valet, otherwise he would have adorned his neck with a heliotrope tie instead of the pink one which the man put out for him."

Sir Robert shrugged his shoulders.

"You seem to forget, Betty, that he is the son of a peer."

"And I am—what am I, Sir Robert? You put it so nicely."

"Your father was a peer; his peerage was the reward of a service rendered to his party."

Betty turned to drum on the window-pane.

"Poor mother! Women never get credit for anything save a bad temper and a well-cooked meal."

"Your mother was a charming woman, Betty, who knew her duty as a wife and toward the social position of your father."

"She was the daughter of a Chicago meat packer who made a fortune because he had broad shoulders and determination, who had the fighting spirit in him, who fought everything there was to fight in thirty years from a brute of a lumberjack who stole his dinner to a thief of a railroad magnate who tried to steal his business."

"I'm not interested in reminiscences, Betty."

"No, I'm only trying to give credit where credit is due. Mother hadn't any pedigree to speak of, had she? But—but you don't get a peerage for shouting 'Down with the Whigs' or 'Vote for the Radicals.'"

Sir Robert twirled his gray mustache fiercely. Betty was one of those young women whom few men ever rightly understand, and so favored in looks that men never cease trying to understand.

"As your guardian, Betty," he said solemnly, "it is my duty to safeguard your interests. You have arrived at an

impressionable age, and my duties have become more onerous accordingly. It is necessary to protect you against yourself."

"By marrying me to the first thing in male attire that happens to have a pedigree."

"Marriage is not a subject for flippancy."

"And it isn't a slave market, either, Sir Robert; else I should robe myself in a loose, filmy gown, and bind my hair in the Grecian mode, and allow you to lead me to the market place and put a price upon my head."

She had returned to his side, and her white arms were stealing over his shoulder.

"You dear old guardy," she laughed, "why should you worry your head about my heart? You have been good to me all these years, and I have learned to love you as my father said I should, but there is just one barrier in my nature which you will never understand. I could never humbly submit to the refined cruelty of a modern husband. In the first place, I simply could not tolerate a dandy; at least, give me something to look at, something that resembles a *man*, that doesn't need a valet to comb its hair and brush its teeth; that doesn't talk with a girlish lisp and play croquet with its maiden aunts; that doesn't read Byron for the sake of the scandal or turn its thin lips in a sneer at what I deem to be the dignity of labor. Pedigree! I couldn't love a pedigree even if it went back to the Stone Age, unless the lineal descendant had some of the manliness of the forbears. In short, I do not wish to marry any one; this single blessedness is too full of happiness to be jeopardized."

Sir Robert shook his head, and stared hopelessly out of the window.

"You can be courteous when you like," he suggested, "and men seem only too anxious to play the part of slaves to you."

"Perhaps that is exactly where the trouble has its origin. I hate a slave—a self-made one; he makes me cold like the sight of an ugly caterpillar on my arm. There! I've left my gloves on

the dressing table. Run upstairs for them, you dear old guardy; the servants are all so busy."

He was gone three minutes. When he returned, the Honorable Betty was buttoning up the gloves.

"So sorry, dear; they were in my bag all the time. But do fasten that silly shoe lace; you tie knots so beautifully."

And he obeyed, as he always obeyed, as always everybody obeyed her.

"Rene is with Todd," he said meekly.

Rene was his only daughter, and the one creature in the world for whom the Honorable Betty appeared to have abiding love.

"Then let us go to her rescue," she said. "Heaven forbid that she should bear my burdens."

"Try to be kind to Todd," Sir Robert pleaded.

"Shall I kiss him?" she asked gravely.

"At least you might apologize for unintentional rudeness."

"I haven't the slightest objection," she answered, in that quick, brisk manner of hers. "After all, an apology is only a lie told at the expense of one's feelings. Come, lead me in and allow me to abase myself."

The Honorable Rupert was looking through Rene's stamp collection when Sir Robert and Betty entered. He was a tall, aesthetic young man, the weakness of the mouth being revealed rather than hidden by the thin, downy mustache.

"I think it's an awfully jolly collection," he enthused, holding up the book to Betty.

"Really!" She had taken the book of stamps, and was affecting inordinate interest. "You must look at my collection some day, Mr. Todd."

"I shall be delighted," said Todd, beaming. "I didn't know that you had a hobby."

"Oh, dear, yes. Not stamps, of course. Just marsh toads and pictures of prize fights."

Sir Robert coughed uneasily. The Honorable Todd laughed incredulously.

"Sir Robert warns me that I owe you an apology." Her eyes were flashing

defiance at her guardian; the dark-eyed Rene, who was ever looking to Betty to lead the fun, prepared herself for fireworks, as she put it. "If I said anything that hurt your feelings—"

"Impossible!" he interrupted gallantly.

"I agree," she snapped icily, giving his words another meaning which he was too slow to appreciate. "Rene and I were going for a short walk, Mr. Todd; would you care to accompany us?"

The Honorable Todd literally prostrated himself.

"Carry my bag—and gloves," said Betty austerely, and he, who deemed it a grievous sin to carry a red flower on the lapel of a gray coat, willingly made a baggageman of himself to please the whim of an erstwhile pork packer's granddaughter. As they prepared to leave the room, Betty threw a challenge at her guardian.

"Any new developments in the share market this morning?" she asked ironically.

From the window of his study, Sir Robert watched the trio walk away from the house. He saw the Honorable Rupert Todd signal peremptorily to a passing motor cab, and saw Betty as peremptorily dismiss it. She meant to walk—and to parade the baggage-man until he was tired of it.

"If she had apologized," Sir Robert muttered, "I believe I should have punched that fellow's head!"

At the same time, Chesney was keenly anxious that the Todd family should receive his ward as a daughter-in-law. While the family was among the oldest in the country, it was also one of the wealthiest, and there were reasons why the Honorable Betty should marry something more than a name. Above the study fireplace hung the photograph of a young man of no more than twenty-five. He had Betty's eyes and high, prominent temples, but the chin was pathetically weak. As Chesney glanced at the handsome face, a shadow fell on his own.

"Ah! Colin boy," he muttered, "if only half the wit of your Sister Betty

had been yours, your father might still have been alive!"

For this boy had brought sorrow to his father's house, not through any moral deficiency, but because of a willfulness and an ambition that had no experience of the world and men to give them balance. Caught in the maelstrom of finance, he had succumbed to the strain. One Malcolm Burke, perhaps the greatest financier of his time, had fascinated the youth. Together, they formulated financial schemes which drew them into the focus of the money world.

Then came a day when the capital of the youth, and a great deal more which he had raised on the strength of his father's name, was invested in Kruppo Oil. If he could have held out a few weeks, he would have amassed a colossal fortune, but, of a sudden, Malcolm Burke threw the whole of the shares that he held in the concern on the market. His very recklessness created a panic, and before nightfall the boy Colin was hopelessly beaten.

He sought out the financier Burke that he might demand an explanation. Why had he done this thing? And the answer was: "You boasted in the club that you and you alone organized this 'bull' corner. I never allow any one, not even my friends, to demean Malcolm Burke."

The boy had returned home, stealing his way to the nursery in which he and Betty had played as children. It was Betty who found him there. He must have fired the shot that ended his young life immediately after writing a letter to his father praying for forgiveness, as the pen on the floor at his side was still wet with ink. It was Betty who called for help, and who was found with the fair curly head of the dead boy on her knee. It was Betty who sought for Burke, but never found him.

The trio returned from their walk in varying frames of mind. Rene was positively choking with suppressed laughter; the Honorable Betty's lips were set firm as though she were de-

termined not to yield to the sympathy that looked reproachfully from her eyes. The Honorable Rupert Todd was perspiring freely beneath a load of packages which he had bravely carried through the streets—Betty would not hear of a cab, and could not wait for the tradesmen to send the things along.

Rene told her father the story of that walk, told it in fitful gasps. The unfortunate Todd had allowed Betty to have lace scarfs tried on him that she might get an idea of the effect, he had returned to a dozen shops to recover her gloves which seemed to have a penchant for hiding themselves in her hand bag, he had been compelled to stand patiently by while she insisted on seeing almost everything that one tradesman had in stock, and to creep out under the withering glances of the shop assistants when Betty decided that she would have to try another place for the ribbon on which she had set her heart.

The crisis or rather the real test of Todd's devotedness had been reached when Betty insisted on buying a glassful of ice cream from the barrow of a street vender. Vainly he had protested that he knew where the most delicious "glaces" in all the world could be obtained; the place was only a three-minute cab drive from where they were standing at the time.

And Betty had said in a voice that was as cold as the vender's cream appeared to be:

"I have set my heart on this. Do you deny me it?"

Todd had capitulated on the instant, and when Betty saw him with the glass in his hand, a pretty spectacle for the fashionable throng that was passing at the time, she seemed satisfied, and returned her own mixture untouched.

"And that," Sir Robert mused, "is how my lady apologizes."

"Apologize!" Rene exclaimed. "Why should Betty apologize to any one? She has only to hold up her little finger to the crowd, and lo! they fall at her feet."

"I'm afraid that she has been spoiled," said Chesney, whereupon the ingenu-

ous Rene opened wide her eyes in astonishment.

"Betty," she averred, "is just Betty, and I wouldn't have her change for all the world."

"It's two to one now," Sir Robert muttered.

He sought out the Honorable Rupert, and in the quiet of the study they formulated a plan as deep in design as any that Cassius ever conceived. At dinner that night they conversed in mysterious whispers which excited the curiosity only of Rene.

Betty said caustically, as she noted the younger girl leaning forward and straining her ears:

"Rene, dear, it is not a sign of good breeding to listen to others whispering at the table."

Todd's cheeks flushed, and Sir Robert concluded the whisper in a louder tone.

"The island," he was saying, "is a perfect Arcadia, and was actually up for sale a few months ago. If your yacht is ready, as you say it is, we should drop anchor off the coast within five days from starting."

"The crew," said Todd, in an undertone, "are kicking their heels while the harbor dues soar upward. We could start almost at once."

Sir Robert glanced up, and saw Betty's eyes upon him.

"Betty," he smiled, "how much will you take for that olive complexion of yours?"

The compliment was too invidious.

"Thirty pieces of silver," said Betty, in a low voice.

## CHAPTER II.

Two nights later the daughter of Sir Robert Chesney was awakened from a sound sleep to find the Honorable Betty, fully dressed, leaning over the bed and holding up a finger in caution.

"Heavens, Betty, you frightened me out of my wits!" she exclaimed. "What's the matter?"

"Everything," Betty replied, tiptoeing to the door and listening intently for a moment. "Rene, darling, do you

love me? Of course, you do. Then hop out of bed and dress yourself quickly. Where's your dressing case? I'll pack it for you. Hurry up! If they hear us moving about, they will come to make inquiries."

"But where are we going? What are we going to do?" Rene, always obedient, was dressing with feverish haste.

"I can't say exactly where we're going," said Betty, "but I do know that we're going to have the greatest adventure that we've ever had in our lives—and we're going to give somebody a glorious thrill. Are you a good sailor, Rene?"

"A sailor, Betty!"

"Yes. Does the sea make you think of the undertaker and wrack your head?"

"I don't like to think about it," said Rene falteringly.

"Right! I anticipated that, and ordered the captain to have plenty of soup taken on board. And I've a pair of smoked glasses in my bag for you; smoked glasses and plenty of soup will make a sailor of you."

"But does father know of this?"

"He will if you talk so loudly. Put that boracic powder in your bag; nothing tempers the heat of the sun so delightfully."

"But is it right to—to run away like this?"

"Of course it isn't; otherwise it wouldn't be an adventure. Only a girl! That's what the Todd person said about me."

"But father will be dreadfully angry, Betty; he wasn't particularly smooth two days ago."

"We shall not be away very long, Rene. Don't tremble there like a lovesick country wench at her first dance. Remember that you're eighteen, and a woman."

"But this seems to be the maddest of all your mad escapades."

"On the contrary, it's the wisest. I'm going to escape my friends for a few weeks and hibernate in the wild—in Arcadia."

"But where are we going? And

what are we going to do? Always you expect me to follow you blindly, Betty. I shall not be a party to my father's death, for that is what it would mean if he awoke in the morning and found that I had flown in the nighttime."

"He will know where we are by mid-day to-morrow. I've posted a letter to him—and to the Todd person. I've been writing for this last hour—letters and telegrams. Rene, dear"—she struck a melodramatic pose—"I discovered a plot yesterday! A plot of which I was to be the victim."

Rene shrugged her shoulders petulantly.

"Betty, dear, you've been reading Dumas by candlelight."

"Perhaps. Now we're going to read Stevenson by moonlight. Ugh! Can't you imagine the Todd person reading Balzac in bed?"

"You are terribly prejudiced against him; he is not nearly so bad as you appear to think. Who else would have tolerated your cruelty while we were shopping the other day?"

"If he had thrown the parcels into the gutter and pulled my hair, I should have thought more of him."

"You're an enigma, Betty."

"And you're awfully slow. Hark! I can hear the motor at the end of the street. I told the fool to wait a hundred yards away. These men are all alike. Are you ready?"

"But the plot?" Rene persisted.

"What a child it is!" Betty sighed. "Listen, then. Sir Robert is prepared to move heaven and earth to get me married to the Todd person. Now, there isn't a man on earth about whom I would worry my head two minutes. I have no cause to think of them in that way. Oh, no! Once upon a time, Rene, a man stabbed a hole in my heart—just here; all the men in the world cannot rightly atone for that sin."

Rene, to whom the story was a bitter memory, nodded sympathetically.

"Sir Robert—who is as dear to me, you little witch, as he is to you—has decided that it is my duty to marry. You see, the average woman hasn't much choice in these matters, but I'm

not an average woman. I dare say that they'll round up a duke or something like that for you—a nice, kindly old duke with gray hair and sciatica, and who is always hunting about on your dressing table to find his upper teeth.

"Well, I endeavored to explain to every one concerned that I'm not in a marrying mood, and that when I am, I shall choose a man after my own heart. But some men are so dense, or blind, Rene, that they will allow you to wipe your feet on them, and then they will meekly rise and apologize if they have soiled your boots.

"Now for the plot! The Todd person possesses a steam yacht, the *Siren*, and he and Sir Robert have arranged a trip to an uninhabited island which belongs to no one in particular. If I told you exactly where it is situated, you might be more reluctant than ever to go. From New York it is no more than a five days' sail, provided we have good weather. It is not on the 'line,' either, so you need have no fear for your complexion; but the vegetation is as near to the tropical as possible without being actually it; there are cocoa palms and crocodiles——"

"Crocodiles, Betty!"

"I couldn't swear to that, because these modern gazetteers are not to be relied on, but if there are palms there must be monkeys, so we shall not be lonely. The island is not one of the Bahama group, so don't build your hopes on bananas picked from the tree."

Rene pulled down her veil.

"I'm ready," she said reproachfully, "and you haven't come to the plot yet."

"I'll rush the rest," said Betty briskly, "and you can punctuate it yourself as we run along to the docks. Sir Robert and the Todd person believe that romantic environs will prompt romance in the individual, and if they take you, and me, and a crowd of dowdy friends to this Arcadia in the Atlantic for a summer holiday, I shall learn to look on the Todd person through a friendly eye.

"I overheard the arch-conspirators, and picked up all the necessary infor-

mation for giving them a shock—the *Siren* is ready to leave at a moment's notice—the captain is a person named Bunce, with fiery whiskers and smelling of ship's tar, and has received orders to sail for this Arcadia to-morrow at noon, but I sent him a telegram to-night in the name of Todd, saying that only two ladies would make the voyage, and that he must be ready to leave at midnight, the others intending to follow in a friend's yacht. There are two stewardesses on board already, and I've bribed Sir Robert's head footman to take the trip with us. Everything will be quite circumspect, so please don't make those grimaces.

"When Sir Robert receives my letter, he will know exactly what to do, and though he stamps his foot and tears his hair, I shall have escaped the horrible torture of hearing the Todd person make love by moonlight on the foredeck of a yacht. Are you ready?"

"For anything," was the reply, and even the abnormally acute ears of the Honorable Betty failed to detect the inflection.

Very quietly the two women descended the stair. The head footman, tall, grim, and silent Higgins, was awaiting them in the hall; he opened the door, took charge of their portmanteaus, and followed them into the street.

"Other luggage in the car?" Betty whispered, and the automaton nodded affirmatively.

The chauffeur smiled—insolently, so Rene thought—as the party entered the car.

"We should do it in an hour," Betty whispered to the man. "It is now quarter to eleven. Strange," she added, turning to Rene, "that everybody in the house should have gone to bed so early to-night."

The *Siren* was berthed close in. Captain Bunce, a telegram in his short, thick fingers, came down from the bridge to greet the visitors. In appearance, Mr. Bunce was in nowise attractive. The fiery beard stood boldly out from his chin, and the end curled upward like the tip of a drake's tail. His

eyebrows were thick and also fiery, but while the left orb was shielded in a perfectly natural manner, the right eye was deliberately shunned by the brow that should have sheltered it; moreover, a touch of muscular contraction caused the lid of the eye continually to flinch.

"Everything in order, captain?" The Honorable Betty might have been the commander of a flotilla. In stature, she towered above the fiery Bunce, and her voice was sharp and imperative. "You received Mr. Todd's telegram?"

"I did," said Bunce, "and of all the——"

"Then act upon the instructions," Betty snapped. "Higgins, get one of the men to help you down with the luggage. This, Mr. Bunce, is Miss Rene Chesney, my companion; kindly see that her orders and comfort are attended to as though they were mine."

"Certainly, madam," said the captain, turning an admiring glance on the trembling Rene, who saw only the wink of the right eye. Betty saw that wink, too, and she called to Higgins.

"Higgins," she said coldly, keeping her eyes on the captain, "as Mr. Todd's representative, you will assume the nominal command. Deal with any case of insubordination as you think fit."

Captain Bunce shifted uneasily on his heels.

"I beg your pardon, madam, but I should like to point out that there can be only one captain of a boat whether it be a barge or a thousand-ton yacht."

"That's all right," said the Honorable Betty briskly; "we'll call you my first officer."

"But what does this—this gentleman know about navigation?" the captain persisted.

"Nothing," said Betty, "but I don't think that there is anything about a ship, or anything else for that matter, that you can teach me."

The right eye winked.

"Madam, I would die rather than contradict a lady," said Mr. Bunce.

"Another worm," Betty sighed, and drew Rene away in search of their respective cabins.

The two stewardesses had made

every preparation for receiving the passengers, and as the *Siren* had been equipped regardless of cost, there was a prospect of a most enjoyable voyage.

Within half an hour, the twin screws were churning the water into a milk-white foam, the lights of the harbor grew dimmer and finally closed their eyes and slept. The night wind, blowing off the land, hummed musically through the spars like an expectant audience awaiting the rise of the curtain on a new musical play. Jupiter, smiling at his post on the port side, winked to the smaller planets as though urging them to hurry out of bed lest they miss the fun. The engines throbbed with the delight of a pleasure to come.

It was not till the Honorable Betty kissed the trusting Rene "Good night" and moved away to her cabin that the enormity of her escapade revealed its full significance. She was not exactly penitent, for penitence is more often than not the child of despair, but thoughts of Rene began to disturb her peace of mind. The sense of responsibility which the trust of the younger girl awakened was not lightly to be trifled with.

Of course, Sir Robert and the others would follow them immediately they received the letter, but supposing anything untoward happened before they arrived. The "adventure" would lose all its snap if any one of the elements conspired against the cruise of the *Siren*.

The Honorable Betty crept into her bunk with just the slightest of trembles on her lips. With some misgiving she switched off the electric light, but the darkness only served to increase her forebodings.

The wind changed from song to sigh, and the engines sobbed like overtaxed slaves. The voice of the man in the crow's nest was solemn and weirdly vibrant, and the answering clang of the bell on the bridge was deep, and hollow, and resonant. Of a sudden, the yacht began to pitch in a most ludicrous manner, for the elements all tended to peace.

The Honorable Betty sat up, and listened intently. Some one on the bridge shouted an order hoarsely, and half a dozen men scurried past the porthole of her cabin. She stretched out a hand to switch on the lights, only to find that the current had failed. With a faint cry of alarm on her lips, she leaped out of the bunk, and tried to open the door. It was locked!

Rene's cabin was next to hers. She beat on the partition with the heel of a dainty slipper, and pressed her cheek against the enamel that she might catch the faintest response. She heard the sound as of some one weeping, and it imbued her with new life and courage.

"Rene!" she called, in a loud voice. "Can you hear me?"

And a smothered voice replied: "Yes."

"Dress yourself, and bring the captain down from the bridge immediately."

"I cannot," came the reply; "the door of the cabin is locked, and neither the lights nor the bells are in working order."

A sailor hurried past the porthole of the Honorable Betty's cabin. He turned and halted only a second as he caught a glimpse of a white face framed by a mass of flowing brown hair.

"Open this cabin door at once!" she commanded.

He muttered a word that sounded like "typhoon," and slipped away in the darkness.

The Honorable Betty called to her aid the spirit of her belligerent grandfather. From the locker beneath the bunk she drew the life belt which she knew was there, fastened it about her waist, and shouted instructions to Rene. Then she leaped at the door, beat frantically at the lock with the back of a silver hairbrush, and finally dragged her cabin trunk from its receptacle with the object of using it as a battering-ram.

The door opened before further damage to the paint was done, and a tall, thin man loomed up in the doorway.

"Coward!" she screamed angrily.

"How dare you lock two women in their cabins to die?"

And a soft and sibilant voice said: "Sorry—re-all! Owf'ly sorry, but we thought it best in the circumstances. The danger is now past. Try the lights; you will find them all right."

And the Honorable Betty, holding the folds of her pink dressing gown with one hand and using the other to still her throbbing forehead, gasped:

"Todd!"

She closed the door with a clash, and hurriedly bound up her hair. Then she stole to the door of the next cabin. The lights were on full, and glancing through the porthole, she saw Rene, also in a dressing gown, sitting on the edge of her bed and rocking with laughter, while Sir Robert Chesney, affecting a solemnity of demeanor that was painfully transparent, was preaching a little homily on the duty of children to their parents.

Of course, they had been on the yacht from the moment it sailed, and when they paused in their banter, the Honorable Betty threw back her head, and asked in acid tones:

"With how much silver did you buy the estimable Higgins?"

### CHAPTER III.

Pen can but vaguely set forth the natural beauties of Penitence Island, for by that name it came to be called in the days that followed the landing of the Chesney party.

Thrown out of the sapphire depths of the Atlantic by some subterranean force, the brown earth had raised a blistered face to the heavens, and the heavens had pitied, and pitying, wept. The winds and the birds had brought the seed, and in the warm, humid climate the palms had speedily towered to perfection.

On the south of the island the yellow shore shelved to the lapping water, making the landing of a boat's party a matter of consummate ease. A few caves, small and ragged, marked the limits of the tide, and farther inland stretched a forest of palms and trop-

ical vegetation. The trees were not so dense as to hide the waters of the many lagoons, even when the observer penetrated no farther inland than the tops of the line of caves. The sun, riding high overhead, percolated through the foliage, and made the waters shimmer like so many silver mirrors.

Far beyond, and rearing its grim head above the intervening forest, was an extinct volcano. Of life there seemed to be little—only the drowsy, lazy hum of insects. If, in the wisdom of Sir Robert Chesney, there was romance in solitude and in romance the germs of love, here was an altar to Cupid.

The *Siren* dropped anchor five hundred yards from the shore, and for an hour the guests of the Honorable Rupert Todd leaned against the deck rail, and gazed at the Arcadia which spread itself out before them.

"An island for sale!" Sir Robert muttered. "Can America really afford to sell a paradise? The very fact that it was advertised for sale is blasphemy in itself. Todd, would you have believed that such a place existed within a five days' voyage of New York?"

"I was thinking," said Todd dreamily, "that no more terrible punishment could be devised than to place a man on that island without a single servant to attend to his wants."

The Honorable Betty, who had not then found it in her heart to forgive any one for the hoax that had been played on her, returned the captain's binoculars, and said caustically:

"It would be a more interesting experiment to put a servant there to teach the man the use of his hands."

Todd smiled pathetically; he had braved a great deal since the night he opened the cabin door and let loose the real typhoon.

"If I thought the idea would catch on," said the practical Sir Robert, "I should buy the place, erect a hundred chalets, christen it 'Honeymoon Island,' and lie on the beach there to watch the crowds come in."

"Not having bought it," Betty inter-

rupted, "have we any right to land and turn it into an excursion ground?"

"Who is there to prevent us?" asked Todd, with an outburst of gallantry and derring-do of which no one suspected him.

A malicious gleam crept into the eyes of Betty.

"Ah! Who indeed?" she asked.  
"Let's swim ashore!"

Sir Robert laughed at the idea; Rene showed her approval by urging Betty to act upon it. Todd deliberately walked to his cabin, and while the others were exchanging meaning glances because of his supposed timidity, he emerged, clad in a bathing costume, with a gold-embroidered dressing gown thrown over his shoulders.

"Come," he said quietly, looking at Betty. "I will wait for you, and see that no harm comes to you."

"Tut! Man, they were joking," Sir Robert put in. "Who knows what fish may be in those waters?"

"I'll go ahead and see," said Todd, and dived neatly over the side.

Amazed, the others watched him cut through the clear blue water with the ease and grace of one who had cultivated the art of natation from birth. He was back within the hour, and as he pattered along the deck to his cabin, the Honorable Betty, glancing through the porthole of her own apartment, whispered: "Well done!" It was not a surrender, although for a second he believed it to be that; it was an expression of relief that malice had not incurred a penalty.

In the cool of the evening, when the great sun was sinking to its slumber, flooding the horizon as it sank in a warm gold, and throwing up tapering shafts of pink, and opal, and amber—when the evening shadows of the island were creeping stealthily to the very hull of the yacht, Sir Robert, Todd, two of the officers, Rene, and the Honorable Betty were taken ashore in the launch.

The atmosphere was pregnant with the spices of the island, and modulated by the thick foliage, the song of the sea behind them floated to their ears in musical whispers.

One of the officers reminded Sir Robert that in that latitude the twilight was exceedingly short of duration, and warned him that he would be ill-advised to penetrate farther into the forest; the wild life was harmless enough, but the presence of so many lagoons and so much succulent undergrowth suggested morass. Sir Robert agreed that the best course to pursue was to return to the yacht after selecting a site where the tents they had brought with them might be erected on the morrow.

"We'll name it 'The Canvas Colony,'" he suggested, "and live the simple life for a few weeks. Betty, dare you tell me that your soul hankers after a drawing-room now?"

"It never did," she replied abruptly, "and if you don't step in and buy this place from the owners, whoever they are, I shall ask you to realize some of my securities, and I'll take it for—for Rene and myself."

He laughed, well pleased. How beautifully his scheme was maturing!

"We'll turn back now," he said. "You heard what the second officer said?"

"I heard," said Betty coldly, and out of the hearing of the man, "but are we being wet-nursed by the gentleman?"

It was a flash of the old Betty; the respite had been too sudden to last.

"But I think that he's right," Sir Robert persisted. "We must turn back."

"Send the launch back for Rene and me," said Betty; "the shadows on those lagoons are too glorious to be missed."

Sir Robert glanced at Rene, and Rene glanced at Todd.

"Yes, send the launch back for us," said Todd, and even the lively wits of the Honorable Betty could think of no subterfuge with which to combat his intention.

Sir Robert and the officers returned to the launch, leaving Todd and the two girls to continue the exploration of the island.

As the three pressed farther inland, the shadows deepened, and the silence of nature became more intense. Determined to show her resentment of his presence, Betty answered Todd's fre-

quent questions in curt monosyllables, and even these were thrown over her shoulder as she insisted on leading the way.

Once when Todd reached out instinctively to take Rene's hand that he might guide her through the undergrowth, Betty, marking the action, turned her lips in scorn, and a moment later cried out:

"Take care, Rene, we're coming to a patch of swamp; better hold Mr. Todd's hand. If he fell into this, what would become of him?"

Rene turned from the path to pluck a bunch of rye grass on which the sun had painted a myriad colors. Betty, twenty yards away, waited patiently. Todd moved toward her, and there was something in his eyes that she had never before seen or believed him capable of.

"Why," he asked, in a reproachful voice, "why do you welcome every opportunity to humble me?"

The Honorable Betty flushed guiltily, but recovered herself immediately.

"I think that Rene needs your assistance," she said, with complete ignorance of his question.

Rene's dress had caught in the fronds of the giant cactus, and Todd turned and ran to her aid.

"Fool!" Betty muttered, striding forward. "I wonder what a real man would say to a woman who snubbed him on every possible occasion?"

She glanced over her shoulder; the other two were following in her wake; Todd was holding Rene's hand; their heads were bowed low, and there was ineffable tenderness in the manner in which Todd helped the girl over the marshy ground. The slight stab at her heart which the Honorable Betty experienced was wholly unaccountable.

Deeper the shadows, darker the pools; lower and more musical the drowsy hum of insect life. The foliage almost completely negatived the feeble light of the heavens, into which the argent moon was creeping slowly from the southern rim of the hemisphere. It was becoming increasingly difficult to pick a path through the reed and cactus

tangle. Betty turned of a sudden, and waited for the others to come up.

"We had better turn back, Rene," she said authoritatively.

"Right!" said Todd, with alacrity, and as anxious as ever to conciliate the changeable temperament.

"It is growing dark," said Betty, ignoring the interruption, and keeping her eyes on Rene.

"Very dark," Todd whispered in confirmation.

"It must be nearly nine o'clock." Betty's voice was ten degrees colder

"Quite nine," said Todd.

"As a fact," said Betty maliciously, as she glanced at the tiny watch on her wrist, "it is ten minutes past seven."

Todd sighed despairingly, and there was appeal in his eyes as he looked at Rene.

"Still, we had better return," the younger girl suggested, and there was a note of defiance in her voice—defiance of Betty.

"You two may return if you wish," was the reply. "For myself, I shall go on a little farther." It was childish in her, but then a woman invariably falls back on childishness when her argumentative faculty fails her.

Even the natural submissiveness of the Honorable Rupert rebelled against such flagrant stubbornness. He touched Rene on the shoulder.

"Come," he said gently, "the Honorable Betty will follow, no doubt."

Betty flinched slightly, and as the two turned away she called to Rene:

"I suppose you know your way back? You have taken the wrong turning already."

No reply was forthcoming, although a pair of abnormally acute ears fancied that they caught the one word, "childishness!"

She watched them out of sight; soon, she reasoned, they would discover their mistake in turning due south; then they would return and one more opportunity of "humbling" him would present itself. She sat down on a boulder, and watched the hand of the silver moon use the face of a lagoon as a palette and smear it with a thousand colors.

She waited quarter—half an hour, and still they did not return. She stirred uneasily, and repeatedly glanced at the face of the watch which the moon considerably illuminated. "Childishness!" Todd was right; she actually began to give him credit for some little spirit.

A soft breeze came through the trees from the coast, and the rustling of the undergrowth aroused her imagination. A bullfrog, squatting in the mud on the edge of a lagoon fifty yards away, croaked dismally; a night bird moved restlessly among the leaves above her head.

Still, no sign of Todd and Rene, although she strained her ears to catch the slightest sound of rustling reeds. She rose to her feet with the intention of making her way to the beach where the launch, she did not doubt, would be awaiting her. Todd and Rene must have found their way there by now.

There was nothing of the coward in the Honorable Betty, but as she was standing, undecided, the eeriness of the situation seemed suddenly to obsess her.

The mystery of a Southern night is as awesome as it is impressive; if the sense of security is in nowise diminished by the eerie stillness, the mind may soar to sublime heights; the imagination, quickened by the sensuous languor of tired nature, feeds voluptuously on every passing sound, or movement, or breath of zephyr; the world of cities, and smoke, and toil is brushed away by an invisible hand, and scrolled on the dark vault of heaven are the dreams and ideals of youth.

But should the nerves be unduly responsive to the promptings of fear, ultrasensitive to the slightest sound, the mystery of the stillness is a torture that no one can rightly understand without actual experience; the whole of the nerves seems to clutch instinctively at the brain for support and protection against the terrible Thing that seems imminent yet never comes; the mind, throbbing with strain, leans forward, as it were, poised on the point of a needle. A leaf stirring under foot causes the mind to swing backward and

forward like the highly sensitized needle of the compass, the blood runs hot and cold alternately, and the perspiration streams from the pores.

And fear came over the Honorable Betty as for a moment she stood there in the forest, one hand outstretched till it touched the slender trunk of a cocoa palm. In a faint voice she called "Rene," but the dull echo only added to her uneasiness of mind. Even the unspeakable Todd would have been assured of a welcome in that moment of awe and foreboding.

With an effort she straightened herself; she was the only one in the party who could not afford to acknowledge weakness; the fear of significant smiles and whispers strengthened her incalculably. After all, she was no more than two or three miles from the beach; the moon was riding high in the sky—where the trees were sparse the ground was flooded with a mellow light.

She climbed a larger boulder in the hope that she might be able to discern the lights of the yacht, and it was at the moment that she reached the summit, holding on with both hands, that an awful cry, unlike that either of a beast or of a human, echoed and reechoed about her. Once, twice, three times it was raised, a guttural yet piercing cry, and the response was as weird as the cry.

Something small and wonderfully nimble literally leaped from a tree a yard from the boulder on which the petrified girl was clinging, and raced along the ground in the direction whence the cry had come. Another and yet another followed in rapid succession, until the whole of the wild life of the island seemed to be rushing precipitately to one point.

A fragment of cloud drifted under the moon. The darkness was intense.

Again, the cry, followed by a low, exultant laugh, and this time the Thing, whatever it was, seemed considerably nearer.

The lips of the Honorable Betty moved in a prayer; her eyes were starting; she pressed her hand to her fore-

head to sooth the terrible pain that was wracking her—and drew it away, wet, and cold, and clammy.

Then, in the darkness, made all the more eerie by the glimmer that came from the shrouded moon, she saw a figure moving toward her. It was a strange, uncanny figure, clad in a gown of some light-colored, flimsy material which the wind played with and the undergrowth clutched at. The darkness and the distance concealed the features, but from the fact that a wealth of hair streamed over the shoulders, the terrified watcher on the boulder gathered that it was a woman. And surrounding the creature were scores of moving objects that fought with each other to gain a place at her side.

The Honorable Betty attempted to flee from the spot. She slipped from the boulder, tried to rise to her feet, and fell back with a cry of pain, her ankle doubled over. She closed her eyes, and drifted into blissful unconsciousness.

#### CHAPTER IV.

Water, cool and indescribably sooth-ing, was dripping on her upturned face; her head had been raised from the ground and pillow'd on some one's knee; a hand, soft, yet firm, was brushing back the tumbled hair from her forehead. Consciousness had returned a full minute before she opened her eyes.

"Ah! You are feeling better?" It was a strong voice, subtly modulated.

She shivered slightly, and sought valiantly to force the brain to perform its functions. A man was bending over her—a man whom she had never before seen. It was on his knee that her head rested. For a few seconds she allowed herself to gaze abstractedly into his face, and he stood the scrutiny without a tremor or word of protest.

The kneeling position did not hide the fact that he was of great stature; his shoulders were broad and powerfully molded; in the regular breathing and rhythmical rise and fall of the chest there was evidence of the trained ath-

lete; his hair was somewhat long and dark in shade—the semidarkness pre-vented her exactly determining the color; the eyes were large and fearless in expression, the upper lip long, and straight, and eloquent testimony to his determination.

Slowly, wonderingly, she raised her head, and stared at the man. In years he could not have been more than thirty-five, yet there was something in the deep lines of his face that inter-preted years of experience of the world. Then, again, his mode of dress dis-pelled the natural assumption that he was of the world—the world in which she had lived most of her young life—the world of society, of commerce, of—of ordinary people. About his shoulders was flung, artistically rather than carelessly, a kind of toga; moccasins, such as the North American Indians wear, incased his feet. He appeared to have been running fast, for the bare right arm was scratched and bleeding as the result of pressing through the undergrowth.

Gravely the Honorable Betty eyed the stranger.

"Where—where is that other—other thing?" she asked. "And who are you?"

His eyelids drooped as he answered, and it seemed to her that his lips twitched:

"What other thing?"

"The uncanny, horrible thing that screamed and was coming toward me when I slipped."

"There is nothing horrible on this island."

"I beg your pardon," she said, "but I saw it distinctly, and I am not given to romancing."

The air of finality in which he had answered her was not in conformity with the Honorable Betty's scheme. And nothing gave her greater courage than an attempt to presume upon the natural weakness of her sex.

"And I," he said quietly, "am not given to the wasting of words on hysterical women. Can you walk?"

She tried to rise, but the pain of her ankle forced her back.

"I think that I have sprained my ankle. My friends are on a yacht which lies off the coast two or three miles away. If you can advise them of my predicament, I shall be grateful."

"And leave you here?"

"I am not afraid."

He was contemplating her thoughtfully.

"Did you land alone?" he asked.

The glimmer of suspicion in her half-closed eyes was easily readable.

"You need not fear the object of the question," he said.

She winced beneath his steady gaze.

"I am not afraid," she said again. "A party landed from the yacht, but I think that they have returned. They promised to send back the launch for me."

"How long ago was that?"

"Probably two hours. Why do you ask?"

"They will not be able to land a boat to-night," he replied. "Listen!"

Distinctly she could hear the crash of the breakers, and for the first time since she recovered consciousness, she felt a strong wind on her cheeks; the surrounding trees sheltered her as she lay there, but she could see that they were bending and swaying violently.

"It was calm enough before that thing—before I slipped," she faltered.

"This island is in a latitude where things that are 'usual' do not happen. The elements are as difficult to understand as—as the temperament of some women. And it is not worth while to try to understand."

"But I must return to-night."

"'Must' is the most elastic word in a woman's vocabulary."

"Even if I have to crawl."

"Place your arms around my neck," he commanded, stooping, as he spoke, and lifting her bodily from the ground. "You will have to stay on the island at least one night. I shall endeavor to make your stay comfortable, although I should like to remind you that you are not within your rights in trespassing on private property. This island belongs to me; it is my property, and

your friends, whoever they are, had no right to land without my permission."

She made no attempt to resist him; in those great, strong arms she was like a child. He was striding forward, glancing from right to left as he strode.

"My friends," she said stubbornly, "will doubtless be able to answer for themselves. Where are you taking me?"

"My house is no more than a mile farther inland."

She closed her eyes. Her cheeks were very pale, and her breathing labored.

"But I cannot stay in your house—alone," she whispered.

The note of fear and helplessness was unmistakable. He halted abruptly, and looked into her eyes.

"Honor," he said slowly, "is not always a matter of circumstances."

With that, he threw up his head and plunged forward. She uttered no other word, merely closed her eyes in resignation; the pains that shot upward from her injured ankle served to keep her thoughts from dwelling on the potentialities of the situation. Indeed, only once did she allow herself to conjure up the state of mind into which Sir Robert would be thrown when he learned that she had been left on the island. Neither wind nor heavy sea would prevent his coming ashore to search for her. The eyes that looked down into hers seemed to read her thoughts.

"They will come when the wind drops," he said. "It may be to-morrow or the next day; it is impossible to tell. But I beg of you to compose yourself. You are safe."

She merely nodded. His voice was frank enough to convince her, even had she doubted the face, which she did not.

They reached the house; it was of plain logs and built into the slope of a wooded hill. A veranda ran the whole length of the front, wicker chairs and lounges being scattered about and conveying the impression that the owner lived most of his life in the open. The door leading into the house was hung with beaded curtains, while from the roof of the veranda depended a hun-

dred trailing ferns. A Scotch collie, which had been dozing on the steps, raised its muzzle and growled as the two neared the house. A couple of gray squirrels, alarmed at the sight of a stranger, raced up the beaded curtain and made themselves secure among the fern-covered beams of the veranda.

"My house is humble, perhaps," said the man, "but it was not built with the object of entertaining."

"You forget that I did not seek its hospitality," was the reply in dignified tones.

They had entered the house. The room on the right, into which he carried her, was probably forty feet by thirty, sparsely yet artistically furnished, the obvious idea being to aim at coolness and comfort. Chairs and lounges, similar to those on the veranda, were placed around the walls; a few pictures and photographs were arranged neatly on small wicker tables in the corners; a punkah, identical with those used in the East, ran the length of the room.

Tenderly he placed the Honorable Betty on a lounge near the open window, lighted the swinging oil lamp, and tilted the rose-colored shade so that the light should not strike directly on her face. Then he deliberately walked to the door, and threw it open.

"No," he said, in a low, musical voice, "you did not seek its hospitality, nor did you come here as a prisoner. I will attend to your injured ankle, and as soon as you feel able, you may go back to your friends."

"I did not mean to be rude," she replied softly. "I am more than grateful for what you have done, and no doubt my friends will show their gratitude in a more convincing way."

"I, in turn, do not wish to be rude," he said, "but I have no desire to meet your friends. They have no right to trespass on my property."

"My guardian is a baronet," she said, somewhat haughtily, "and it was his intention to purchase the island, which we understood was for sale."

"On this island," he retorted, with spirit, "I am a king, and for five years

this island has belonged to me. I am not responsible for your guardian's intentions. Allow me to remove your shoe; it should have been removed before, but one is apt to be forgetful in the presence of a woman."

He knelt by her side, and removed the shoe. His actions were deliberate, yet so tender that he might have been what Sir Robert would have called a "lady's man" all his life. He brought spring water, and gently bathed the swollen parts, then bound them firmly with linen bandages.

"It is only a slight sprain," he muttered, "and you should be able to put your foot to the ground within a couple of days."

She smiled incredulously. Did he really think that she was going to lie there in that house for two days with only him and the surly collie for companions? She was sufficiently broad-minded metaphorically to snap her fingers at the very suggestion of—well, unconventionalism. She flattered herself that she was able to analyze character, and no other face that she had seen suggested half the strength of character or nobility of thought. Had he glanced up at the moment he was bathing her ankle, he would have seen a quiet smile playing about the corners of her mouth; she was wondering how the estimable Todd would have performed the office.

But to stay there for two days, while the rest of the party were hunting frantically through the woods for her, was simply too preposterous an idea.

"No doubt you would like to send a message to your friends?" Again he had read her thoughts, and this time his prescience alarmed her; it seemed to her that his eyes had been trained to look into another's mind. "I will bring you writing material if you care to scribble a note."

"And you will take it?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"I think that I told you I had no desire to meet your friends. Write the note, and I will see that it is taken to the beach."

She wrote the note:

Am quite safe. The bearer will guide you to my retreat.

BETTY.

"May I read what you have written?"

He was holding out his hand, and before the audacity of the request dawned upon her she had handed over the missive.

"Better strike out that last phrase," he said coolly. "The dog will take the message to the beach, where he is certain to be seen by some one on the yacht. He resents strangers, as I do, so they will not be able to follow him back. I have already assured you that you will be quite safe in my house. When your ankle is better, I will conduct you to the beach. No doubt you are hungry; if you will amuse yourself with a book for a few minutes, I will see what can be done in the way of preparing supper."

It was useless to protest, even had she wished. Everything that he said was a command rather than a suggestion, although his manner was as far removed from arrogance as pole from pole. He went from the room, and presently the collie pushed open the door, trotted up to the couch, and allowed her to remove the book from its mouth. She spoke to the animal coaxingly, but it turned immediately its errand was performed, and gravely trotted out of the room.

"The book," Betty mused, "should be 'The Arabian Nights,' then I shall wake up and find myself on the *Siren*."

She was wrong; it was a book of poetry, and dedicated by the author: "To the only person who rightly understands me—my mother."

She was reading with obvious interest when he returned, and as she glanced over the edge of the book, a faint exclamation escaped her lips. He was in evening dress.

He saw the expression on her face, and the blood mounted to his temples.

"It is the first time I have dined with a young lady for some years," he said apologetically, "and the temptation to swing back to civilization was too great to be resisted. The book is mine; I trust that it does not bore you."

She was too dazed to make reply. The complex character of the man was beyond her comprehension.

He was in nowise offended by her silence, but proceeded briskly to drag a table to the side of the lounge on which she was lying. Then he discovered a number of cushions, and without asking permission or consulting her desires, propped her up so that she could reach the table without disturbing her injured ankle.

Again he left the room, to return presently with the meal. And again he caught the puzzled expression on her face. He said:

"One of the most edifying discoveries a man can make in the solitude of the wilds is that the culinary art was not intended to be monopolized by the female sex. Let me help you to a little soup; you may never again taste its like; it is a discovery of my own—wild fowl with a strip of seaweed to give it an additional flavor. Wonder why seaweed has never received due recognition as an edible?"

The Honorable Betty accepted the dish, enjoyed it, went through the whole of the menu with the self-assurance she was wont to evince in a restaurant or hotel, then lay back on the cushions and eyed him thoughtfully. He looked up and smiled—a little sadly.

"Well! You think me a strange creature?"

"No," she breathed, in an undertone, "just a——"

"Yes——"

"A delightful savage!" she confessed.

He did not laugh; just rose from the table, cleared away the platters, and walked across to the piano in the corner of the room.

"If I were not a savage," he threw over his shoulder, "I should invite you to smoke a cigarette. I am going to smoke one; if you do not like the aroma you will find the cord of the punkah tied to the end of your lounge; move it gently, and you will find it sufficient for your needs. If you do not care for music, you may put your fingers in your ears. The instrument is not the better

for the varying climate, but it belonged to my mother."

For quarter of an hour he played—played her into paradise, so she told herself. His delicacy of touch was equal to that of any professor she had heard, and from the manner in which he swayed to the soft cadences it was easy to believe that there was music in his very soul. Presently he paused, and half turning on his seat, asked her:

"Why did you wander away from the others to-night?"

"There are moments when one wishes to escape from one's friends," she answered.

A silence. He was gazing at the ivy keys. Then:

"And why," she began; "why have you wandered away from—"

"From the world?"

She nodded, and kept her eyes on his like one fascinated.

"To escape my enemies," he replied, in a low, tremulous voice.

"Your enemies!" she echoed.

"Yes, my enemies—avarice, artificiality, greed, and jealousy in their many forms; greed of gold, of position, power; jealousy of men, of women, of everything. You do not understand? It is not to be wondered at, and it is impossible lucidly to explain."

He had risen from the piano, and was standing near her. His eyes gleamed brightly, his cheeks were flushed as with new wine, and the muscles of his powerful neck were tense as though he were fighting hard to suppress some emotion with which he was controlled.

"You called me a savage," he went on. "Whether or not it was in jest, the description was accurate. Some men never lose the strain of the savage that was in their forbears; it may lie dormant, but it never dies until the breath goes out of their bodies. Civilization, education, what you will, does no more than smear it over with veneer, and sooner or later there comes a time when the strain asserts itself; ruthlessly it tramples underfoot the finer senses which have been cultivated in the hothouse of modernism; it fights

its way to the front like a wolf through a flock of sheep, and completely subjugates the brain. Yes, I am a savage, and that was one of the reasons why I came out here. I wished to escape from the world of men—to escape from myself; I came here to do penance for a crime committed in a moment when the savage that was in me rose to the surface. Solitude! That is what a man of my caliber needs. It is solitude that subdues the savage. For there is no greater punishment than solitude!"

"What crime have you committed?" She asked the question in a voice that was almost listless, for she deemed his words to be merely figurative.

His answer, given in a deep, hoarse whisper, chilled the blood in her very heart. Terror that she had never before known seized upon her. A thousand phantoms seemed to glide from the dark corners of the room and hover about her.

"I killed a man!" he said.

## CHAPTER V.

For a long while she lay there watching him with terror imprinted on her face; then her confidence in him returned—her eyes lighted on the dedication of the book: "To the only person who rightly understands me—my mother."

"I think that I understand," she said in a whisper.

He hesitated a moment; his eyes were riveted on hers.

"Yes," he said, in a deep voice that thrilled her, "I believe that you do. There is something of the savage in your nature. I saw it to-night when you opened your eyes at the foot of the Signal Rock; it spoke to me when you reminded me that you did not seek my hospitality. There was no fear in your eyes then, nor when I carried you through the forest. You are different"—his voice softened—"from all the women I met in that other world. Men would fight for the honor of paying you homage. And you would despise them for it."

He stopped in his ruminations, and

with an expressive gesture threw off the mood that had come upon him.

"Come," he said, in a laughing voice, "we are talking like musty philosophers. The hour is late. You must be tired. Hark! Can you hear the wind in the trees? I love to sit here and listen to it. I'm afraid that you'll have to turn this place into a sleeping apartment. I will fasten the window screens so that their rattling shall not disturb you. Let me extend this lounge, and bring you some wraps; when the door and windows are closed, there is little draft. And—and you will need a mirror; I will bring you one."

He left the room, to return a moment later with an urn containing water, a small hand mirror, and an electric torch.

The great collie followed close upon his heels.

He placed urn, mirror, and torch on the table near the lounge, threw an Indian blanket over her feet, and looked again into her eyes.

"You are not afraid?" he said.

"Why should I be?" Her eyes were half closed, her thin lips compressed in a challenge.

He bowed his head, moved to the door, returned, and with a deliberate movement placed a revolver on the table, and in such a position that she could reach it without moving from the lounge.

"It is fully loaded," he said significantly, opening the magazine, and withdrawing a cartridge for her inspection.

He called the dog to him, and motioned to it to lie on the floor near her couch.

"Guard!" he said, and the intelligent beast composed itself with a whimper of satisfaction after gently licking the hand of the woman.

"There is a bell rope near your head," he went on, moving toward the door. "Do not hesitate to ring should you need anything or be alarmed by the wind. Good night!"

"Good night!" she whispered. There was a new fear in her voice.

The door closed. She heard him turn the key in the lock.

The seconds which immediately followed were momentous and oppressive to her.

Something was pushed under the door. She sat up, and strained her eyes to determine its nature. Then she sighed deeply, and with great relief.

It was the key.

The romantic did not overshadow the practical Betty. For a quarter of an hour or longer she reflected on the risks of the great "adventure," which she told herself had been of her own seeking; and she was contrite enough to reproach herself for causing her friends anxiety; but she had crossed the stream—there was no turning back. She sighed a little, leaned over, and patted the head of the collie; and composed herself to sleep.

It was the whimpering of the collie that aroused her. It was scratching at the door and running to and from the couch in a distressed manner. There was no need to use the torch—the first streak of dawn was percolating through the window screens.

"Who's there?" she called out, reaching for the revolver as she called.

From the room on the other side of the hall came the sound of scuffling feet. A man's voice—his—shouted warningly, threateningly. Something—probably a heavy piece of furniture—fell with a crash, and following that came the wild, inhuman cry which she had heard in the forest the previous night. It was the cry of a woman, and a woman in pain and mortal fear. Again and again it rang out, alternating with the deep voice of the man. It was not a cry for help, but rather of despair.

Her whole body thrilling with an awful fear, her eyes starting, and her blood cold, the Honorable Betty literally rolled from the couch, and grasped the revolver. What tragedy was being enacted behind that door? And who was the woman?

"Jealousy of men, of women, of everything! Yes, I am a savage; that is one of the reasons why I came out here!"

His words repeated themselves. For the first time she realized their full significance.

"Some men never lose the strain of the savage!"

She dragged herself to the door, and beat upon it with the butt of the revolver. But the noise without drowned any that she made, and the collie, now frantic, added to the cacophony. The front door leading on the veranda was thrown violently open, evidently by the shrieking woman as her cries came from a greater distance, growing fainter and fainter. The man, too, was in the open, pursuing her, for his cries were blended with hers.

The Honorable Betty, undeterred by the sharp pains that shot upward from her ankle, dashed at a window screen, and tore at the fastenings until the blood streamed from her hands. She was in a prison, her jailer a savage. The great collie was in a similar state of terror, for it leaped at the window screen as though to add its strength to hers. And its whining was as weird as those cries that came from without.

With a great effort, she tore away part of the screen sufficient to admit the passage of the dog's body. The animal leaped through.

Dawn! From the eastern horizon the rays of the sun shot upward to the zenith, splashing with opal, and amber, and rose the lingering shadows of night. A gloriously delicate effulgence spread itself over the forest, burnishing the topmost branches till they resembled the leaves of the gold beater. The wind had died down to a breeze that turned the long rank grass so that the morning sun might bathe it as a mother her children; there was a stir in the air that could be likened to the trilling of a flute on the summit of a far-away mountain. The dew of night sparkled like so many jewels on the undergrowth. The waters of a lagoon three hundred yards from the house shimmered in the early sunshine and rippled to the breeze; and sweetened, and made sensuous and fragrant by the cool of night, the miasma of the marshes lifted gently.

But of all this tropical dawn the Honorable Betty saw nothing. Her eyes were fixed upon two running figures: one a woman in the filmy attire of night, her long hair streaming like a black pennant; the other a man pursuing her relentlessly, and rapidly narrowing the distance that separated him from her. Nearer and nearer to the lagoon.

The watcher from the window ceased her own efforts to escape, and gazed in trembling awe on the scene to which there seemed to be only one result.

And even as the watcher caught her breath, the fleeing woman reached the edge of the lagoon. Like a white streak shooting out of the undergrowth, she leaped into the water, and less than two seconds later the form of the man followed. There was a violent struggle in those mysterious depths, but the man triumphed. He reached the side, and scrambled up the bank, retaining his hold on the woman, who now lay still as in death. He placed her on the bank, shook himself as though he were some great dog, then picked up the dripping thing at his feet, and retraced his steps to the house.

And as he approached, the Honorable Betty's courage returned. She climbed through the opening in the window, regardless of the agonizing pain of her ankle. There was no intention in her mind to escape. A weaker woman needed succor, and the woman in whom the strain of the savage was rapidly rising above the gently nurtured city-bred emotions was prepared to succor her.

The man saw her standing there against the veranda; one white hand was holding on to a pillar for support, and in the other gleamed the revolver. It seemed to her that there was triumph in his eyes, triumph because of a victory over a weak woman.

"What are you doing there?" he called out. "Go back to your room. Go back, I say!"

She made no reply. His foot was on the first step of the veranda. The dead-like thing that he was carrying lay limp and wet across his great shoulders.

Again, he ordered her back to her room, and as she made no movement, he passed on into the house. She knew that he would return in a second, and braced herself for the ordeal that seemed imminent.

When he came to her, he was breathing hard, and there was anger in his voice.

"You seem to forget that you are merely a guest in my house," was all that he said. Had he struck or sneered at her, she would have been less surprised.

"A guest!" Her head was nodding slowly as though she were striving to master her passion. Her thin lips were drawn back; her eyes narrowed. Then: "You coward! You savage!"

All that is meant by contempt and loathing was in her voice. He took a step forward, and at once the revolver went up to the level. Again she whipped him with those words: "Coward!" "Savage!" Unspeakable pain was in every line of his strong face as he stood there gazing at her.

"This—is this the reason of your exile— that you may torture a defenseless woman!"

Still, he made no reply, although his lips tightened spasmodically, implying that each lash had cut him to the quick.

"You say that you have killed a man!" Now, there was biting irony in her voice, and the trembling of the weapon in her hand betrayed the emotion by which she was being moved. "I don't believe it; a man is above your might! It is a weak, helpless woman that you prey upon. Killed a man! Come along, then, and try your hand on a woman who isn't weak—a woman who feels that she could kill a thousand such as you without turning a hair!"

"Go back to your room," he said again. "You don't know of what you are speaking. You have been unstrung by what you have seen—what you had no right to see—what I hoped you would not see."

"Yes, I shall go back into the house," she sneered, "but not because of fear of you; I am going in to see that un-

fortunate woman, and she shall go back with me to my friends. They will know how to deal with you."

Still covered by the revolver, he eyed her helplessly. His handsome face was perspiring, and the water that dripped from his hair streaked his cheeks.

"All my life," he muttered, "I have been misunderstood, but never as now. I wonder by what whim of fate you came to this island?"

"Cowards are never safe," she replied. It was on her lips to scourge him again, when a strange thing happened.

A voice, very low and thin, came from the doorway behind her:

"Who is talking of cowards?"

She turned quickly. The woman she had seen in the water was standing a yard away. The long hair was still wet, but a thick blanket had been substituted for the drenched night garments. She was a little, old woman, with deep wrinkles running away from the corners of her eyes.

"Cowards! Dear me! Strange words in this beautiful kingdom! And who are you, my lady?" She was bowing before the Honorable Betty, and glancing, between words, at the silent man.

Betty was too weak to answer; she was swaying dangerously.

The man stepped forward, and placed his arm affectionately on the shoulder of the little, old woman.

"This lady injured her ankle in the forest last night," he said calmly; "she slept in the drawing-room. Let me take you into the house, mother. You should sleep for an hour."

"Sleep! Ah, yes. I have been attending too many functions of late, my son—far too many."

She turned with him, but the sight of the white-faced woman standing near seemed to send her thoughts off at a tangent.

"I am grateful that you should have honored my kingdom with a visit," she said, the light of insanity blazing in her small eyes. "To-morrow you shall come with me to see my subjects."

She broke away from the restraining

hand, and on the edge of the veranda raised her shrill voice.

"See! See!" she laughed, turning to the Honorable Betty.

From all parts of the forest came squirrels of the American gray species—tiny, bright-eyed squirrels that had learned to know that voice as the voice of one who fed them daily. A few yards from the veranda they halted, and peered suspiciously at the stranger there. The old woman threw up her hand, and away they scampered, the while she shrieked with laughter.

"Come," said the man, ignoring the swaying girl.

The old woman stretched out her hand to him, and tenderly he led her into the house.

Half an hour later the Honorable Betty came again from her room. Her eyes were red-rimmed. He was sitting on the veranda, and, apparently, lost in thought. The great collie was curled up at his feet. So slight was her footfall that he might not have heard it, for he did not turn his head. Only when she dropped on one knee, her bowed head brushing his hanging arm, did he stir. He was the first to speak.

"My mother was injured in a motor-car accident five years ago," he said. "That is the other reason why I came out here."

She was sobbing as though her heart was breaking.

"Please don't speak," she whispered brokenly. "I am trying to understand."

"I have no more to say in explanation," he said, and in the long silence that followed the wild things of the forest seemed to hold their breath.

"It is enough." Her voice was weak, for in her throat were tears.

Of a sudden she raised her head, and impulsively caught at his hand.

"To crave pardon for all the cruel things I have said is but a weak way of healing the wounds inflicted. What can I say or do?"

He rose from the chair, and drew her to her feet.

"Bear with me a while," he said. "On the day that I landed here with my mother, I was heart weary. Be-

hind me lay all those things which some men deem essential to life. The career which I had mapped out for myself was cut short—not so much because of my mother's affliction as the feeling of remorse that overwhelmed me. I was possessed of wealth—great wealth; had I wished, I could have built a palace in any one of the great cities of the world, and lived the remainder of my life in idleness, knowing that the world of pleasure and gayety was at my gates when I should desire it.

"But my soul hungered for something more expansive. I wanted to travel back—back over the ages—away from all that was insincere and shallow, away from men and women who mocked the Designer by living their lives in narrow grooves—men and women whom wealth could buy and sell at a moment's notice. At the bidding of an impulse, I came away from an artificial world into a world of romance.

"But, as I say, my heart was weary. I felt that I was indeed what you—what you were justified in assuming me to be—a coward—a moral coward. I felt that I was fleeing from men and women because I was unfitted for their society. The truth was that the savage in me rebelled against the orthodoxy of their lives. In time, I came to regard my voluntary exile as a penance; the selfishness of the life was counterbalanced by a desire to do something for the world I had left.

"At least four of the emigration schemes which take the callow youth from the slums, and give them a chance in the wilds, were worked out on this island; they were financed by my bankers. This is not the moment for modesty; it is only meet and right that you should hear the whole story. Beyond the forest, away to the north, yonder, is a miniature drainage scheme which may one day benefit the world in general.

"These things served to soften the pain of solitude, and gradually those other passions and desires of which men are constituted died away. I had no wish or inclination to return to the

haunts of men. There, I was a stifled unit liable at any moment to burst into flame. There, I was never certain of myself.

"Here—mark that seabird as it sails inland on the crest of the wind, the magnificent throw of its pinions, the glorious sweep into space! Look yonder, where the forest dips into the valley until the branches of the trees seem to kiss the brow of the hill! Listen to the swelling roar of the ocean! Ah, yes, this is the one place in all the world where a spirit such as mine should be confined; yonder in the cities it is wild and dangerous because of its very exceptionableness; here it is equally wild yet harmless because the environment is in consonance.

"And then you came!

"Seldom or never during the five years of my exile have my thoughts inclined to the sex that sways so many destinies in that other world. Always I distrusted women, save one."

He glanced at the house.

"Never could I bring myself to pander to their natural weaknesses, or rather their tendency to take advantage of the privileges of their sex. And I loathed the men who made serfs of themselves that they might win a fleeting smile.

"But the moment you spoke to me, I knew that you were not as other women, and the emotions, which I thought were dead, aroused themselves from slumber. In those brief moments when I held you in my arms—no fear in your eyes, no quiver on your lips, no thought in your mind, if the face is a reflex, that was not pure and noble—I would have brooked all the dangers in life for your sake. In those moments, I was an exiled king, and you—you were my queen.

"And now—now the reign is at an end. You will go back to your friends and forget. It has been a dream—a dream of a single night. You will go back to the world that claims you. You will go back to be loved by other men who are better versed in the art of wooing.

"Perhaps you are thinking that this

is all a pretty romance. You have stepped out of that narrow groove of which I spoke, and maybe no one is more surprised than you yourself that in this little world there should be something that is not—well, conventional. Why, I do not even know your name, and you are equally ignorant of my identity. I do not wish to know your name, because you will always remain in my memory as—as a queen—my queen. And I shall remain in your memory as—"

"As a king," she breathed.

Her small head was thrown well back on her symmetrical shoulders, her lithe body was straight as a willow wand, her lips, slightly parted so that they revealed the gleaming teeth, trembled because of the joy that thrilled her whole being.

He spoke no word, just reached out till his fingers closed on hers.

And standing thus, savage looked into the eyes of savage!

From somewhere in the forest came the sound of trampling feet, the dry twigs snapping like so many whip cracks.

The man on the veranda looked down into the eyes of the woman.

"They are coming—your friends," he said, and a smile as of resignation spread over his face.

"I will tell them everything," she said, still allowing his hand to retain hers.

From out of the forest came three men—the Honorable Rupert Todd, Sir Robert Chesney, and the first officer of the yacht. They shouted joyfully as they swept across the intervening space, Todd leading the way.

"Good Lord, Betty, where have you been?"

He stopped short at sight of the man by her side, and turned questioningly to Sir Robert.

The baronet had reached the edge of the veranda before he took in the situation. The Honorable Betty stepped forward as he came up the steps.

"I met with a slight accident last

night, Sir Robert," she began, "and stayed the night in the house of this—this gentleman's mother."

And all that Sir Robert said as he staggered back was:

"Good God! Malcolm Burke!"

## CHAPTER VI.

Nothing save the strained, hard breathing of men and the gasp of a woman in doubt and pain. In those few moments at least one man of the company suffered untold agony; that much was evidenced by the pallor of his cheeks and the grip of his nails on the palms of his hands; his eyelids drooped till the dark lashes stood out in a line from the white cheeks. A prisoner come to judgment—a king the moment after his dethronement! And yet in that moment he stood high above them all—proud and kingly in his isolation.

Sir Robert Chesney was leaning against a pillar of the veranda, his breath coming in quick, sharp jerks. The Honorable Rupert Todd was staring hopelessly from one figure to the other.

"Well!" It was Burke who spoke, and the word seemed to rise from a fathomless pit.

"Betty"—Sir Robert was pointing at Burke—"you say that you have accepted the hospitality of that—that man? Then you have stayed in the house of the man who was morally the cause of your brother's death?"

Again that tense silence with which the very elements seemed in accord. Then Betty crept forward until she was looking close into the eyes of the man who had moved her as no other man had done.

"Is it true?" she asked. "I will believe none but you."

"I was Malcolm Burke, financier," he said, with terrible calmness, "and I was responsible for the ruin of Colin Gray. That was the name of the man whom, I told you, I killed."

"And you have nothing more to say?"

"Nothing."

Another long silence.

"My brother was part of my life," she said, in a whisper, and though the words were directed at him her eyes roamed helplessly from face to face. "His death hastened that of my father. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand," he replied, in an undertone.

And still it seemed to her that the full significance of the tragedy was not borne in upon him. The calmness of his demeanor, the stolid set of his facial muscles—these outward signs wounded her almost as deeply as each word that she uttered was wounding him.

"Colin and I were children together. Are you listening?"

"Yes, I am listening."

"We played together. It was I who found him in the nursery on the day that he shot himself."

"Well?"

She was too dazed to understand his apparent indifference. The rapid sequence of events had overtaxed her powers of assimilation. She turned away, and held out her hand to Sir Robert.

"Let us go back to the yacht," she said, in the voice of a weak child.

They moved away—she, and Sir Robert, and Todd, and the officer. Her head was held high, her eyes were open wide and staring vacantly before her. No word was spoken as they crossed the clearing, but at the moment when they were about to enter the forest she stopped and turned to look back.

The king of Penitence Island was sitting on the steps of the veranda, his face buried in his hands. And the muzzle of the great, rough collie was thrust forward on its master's knee.

Another day had dawned, and was waning into twilight. The yacht still rode at anchor off the southern coast of the island. A thousand fairy lights were strung beneath the deck awnings. From the afterdeck came the sound of music. Sir Robert Chesney had his own ideas of banishing gloom.

The Honorable Betty was sitting alone on the foredeck when Rene went to her. For a while neither spoke; the

younger girl was sitting on the deck itself, her arm placed affectionately on the other's knee.

"Betty, dear," she said, at last, "it has been a great adventure. But you—you have paid for it. Why don't you speak?"

"The woman always pays," said Betty, in a whisper.

"You are suffering, darling?"

"That is the price."

A pause of a full minute's duration. At the other end of the yacht, Sir Robert Chesney's deep bass voice was raised in song:

"I am a bandolero;  
Am an outlaw, and have a kingdom beneath  
my sway."

"Betty—I wish that we had not left you alone; Rupert and I."

"It gave him an opportunity to propose to you," was the reply.

"How did you find out?"

"You talk in your sleep. May I congratulate you?"

"You are not angry or——"

"Awfully jealous, of course. Heavens! When will that song come to an end? I'm glad that you didn't get the duke with the artificial teeth."

"You and Rupert were not suited to one another. Were you?"

"I wonder?" said Betty.

"You were always enigmatical."

"That certainly wouldn't suit Mr. Todd."

"And I believe that you're spiteful."

"A woman," said Betty, "commences to doubt her female friends the moment after the man proposes. Rene, darling"—she kissed the girl warmly, impulsively—"don't doubt me. I want all the love and sympathy that you can spare; I never wanted it so dearly as now. You are the only thing in the world which in my eyes is innocent, and pure, and good. Now, go to your lover and be happy. I want to think of all that I'm going to do when we get back."

And the girl had no sooner left her side than Sir Robert came to take her place.

"We're going ashore to-night for the last time," he said, "just to look round."

"When do we sail?"

"To-morrow, at noon. And when we get back——"

"Well?" There was a cold look in her eyes.

"I shall move every stone so that this island may come into our possession. It can be done."

"And then?"

"Come back, and threw him out of it—throw him literally. Heavens! I know of a thousand men who would give ten years of their life for the chance of humbling that fellow."

"What was his offense?"

"Offense!" Sir Robert stared at her in amazement. "Bless me, Betty, any one would think that you had no memory. Six or seven years ago that man was a perfect terror in the money market; no one dared move without first learning what he was going to do."

"He was their master?"

"H'm! Certainly he knew how to keep them on tenterhooks."

"And for that they would welcome a chance to humble him?"

"You think that he doesn't deserve it?"

"Oh, no. I was thinking that it was so magnificent a revenge!"

Sir Robert removed the cigar from his lips, and looked her full in the face.

"Betty," he said, with something like consternation in his eyes, "I believe you are actually interested in the fellow."

And without flinching or betraying the slightest embarrassment, she said:

"I believe that I am."

"And yet every fiber of your body should be at war against that man."

She raised her head, and there was glorious dignity in its poise.

"I know my duty, Sir Robert," she said, "both to the memory of the dead and to myself. You say that this yacht sails for home to-morrow? Good! The sooner the better. I want to get back to the world of humbug and sham, for it seems to me that it is the only natural life to live in these days. Why did you bring us out here—for it was your proposition? Back yonder I was comparatively happy; the constant whirl and gayety served at least to keep down

other—other emotions which even I myself did not know existed.

"Sir Robert"—her voice trailed away in a sob, her head drooped till her face was hidden from him—"why am I not like other women? Look at Rene—she is happy! Why is my nature so far removed from hers?"

Paternally he stroked the bowed head, and ineffable tenderness softened his voice as he replied:

"You are like other women, darling, although at times I think there is just a touch of the wild in your nature, but I love you because of that very wildness. You are as dear to me as—as my own child Rene."

"No, no." She was brushing the fallen hair from her eyes. "I am not like other women. I was never like other children; they loved wax dolls, and pretended while I searched for the live things of the fields and hedge-rows, and hungered for reality; they fondled pet dogs when I dreamed of wild beasts and great forests such as—such as this that spreads itself out before us. No, no. Their life was never mine. I realize it now. Look! Do you see those gulls dipping into the surf? I am more like a gull than a butterfly, despite these trappings of mine. I envy those gulls their wild, unrestrained life; there they are, free as the wind itself, roving where they will, fighting for their food, glorying in their very outlawry—and, in the end, dying bravely on some unknown rock."

Sir Robert sighed deeply.

"Betty, dear, your nerves have been unstrung by the incidents of the last day or two. Believe me, you will recover yourself when we get back to civilization. Really, I am beginning to believe that I have made a terrible mess of things by coming out here. Come, pull yourself together. They are getting ready to go ashore; don't give them the impression that you are—well, disappointed. You know what I mean?"

"I don't."

"Well, there's Todd, for instance. He is really one of the best fellows in the world, but in the circumstances it would be only natural if he felt that he

was responsible for your—your depression."

"How can that be, when he has relieved me of the unpleasant task of—of telling him that we are unsuited to one another?"

"Ah!" Sir Robert laughed lightly. "The old Betty is herself again. Yes, we are coming, Rene."

The Honorable Betty stepped firmly down the ladder to the steam launch.

## CHAPTER VII.

It was the order of Sir Robert Chesney that the members of the party should keep together, but he had made no allowance for the fact that lovers have little desire for the company of others. And, as he said afterward, it would have been as easy to control the tides as the Honorable Betty. The Honorable Rupert and Rene gradually bore away from the rest of the party, having previously assured Sir Robert that they were familiar with the paths in the forest, and would find their way back to the launch within the hour.

Instinctively the others of the party kept to the west of the house on the hill, but moved forward in a northerly direction. Rene and Todd had taken the path that led to the east of the house. Once Sir Robert paused to doubt the wisdom of walking farther; the trees were more dense to the north, and the glorious fauna did not compensate for the heaviness of the tangled undergrowth; but the Honorable Betty insisted on pushing on at least another mile. There was something beyond the belt of trees that she wished to see. If there was a practical side to a savage nature, it was worth traveling far to inspect it. And it was beyond the belt that he had built his miniature drainage scheme that was to benefit humanity.

The light waned. When they turned round, and looked along the vista formed by the trees, they could see the yacht through a telescope.

Suddenly the dark sky beyond was lit up as by a beacon. A golden flush spread itself over the canopy, deepening rapidly into the color of blood,

splashed here and there with vivid yellow streaks.

"If I couldn't believe my watch," Sir Robert mused, "I should say that the day was breaking."

The first officer of the yacht shook his head doubtfully.

"I've sailed these seas for fifteen years," he said, "and cannot remember seeing anything like it."

"And the wind seems to have passed through a furnace," Sir Robert muttered, wiping the perspiration from his expansive forehead. "I don't think that—"

He stopped dead, as an awfully piercing shriek echoed through the forest.

"My God!" he exclaimed. "What's that?"

Instinctively he turned to Betty. Her cheeks were deathly pale, and she was staring ahead as though suddenly petrified.

"God help us!" It was the officer speaking. "The forest is on fire, and the wind is blowing this way!"

"Back!" Sir Robert shouted. "We can reach the beach in time."

"And what of Rene?" The Honorable Betty was holding out her hands in appeal.

"Rene!" Sir Robert gasped. "Oh, my God! Rene! Where are they? Will they have the sense to dash for it? They must have seen it."

"Not if they are behind the hill to the east," Betty whispered, in awestricken tones. "They would not see it till it was close upon them. Run! It is gaining on us already!"

Even as she spoke, there was a stir in the forest—a rolling wave of life as the wild things swept toward the coast.

They ran for twenty minutes; then the Honorable Betty stopped.

"You go on," she shouted. "I'm going to warn Rene. There is a path here leading across the island. And I know where they will be."

Sir Robert, panting breathlessly, leaped toward her; but eluding him, she sped away to the left. The two officers seized Sir Robert's arms, and hurried him forward.

It seemed to her that she had been running for hours, and yet her strength was greater than it had ever been. Her face was bleeding in a dozen places where it had been scratched as she tore through the brambles. Her hair was flying loose; her dress hung in ribbons.

On the other side of the hill was the Signal Rock. From that point she would be able to command a view of the hillside.

To reach the rock she must pass the house. Was he there? Had he received warning? Or was he out yonder braving the dangers for the sake of the helpless little woman who gave him birth?

The veranda was deserted. She hammered on the door. There was no response. She leaped down the steps, and turned in the direction of the Signal Rock. Far behind her, clouds of smoke were lifting up from the trees, and shutting off the sky in a continuous screen. The heat, even at that distance, was terrific. The leaves of the trees above her head were shriveling and falling, and the wind increased in velocity as though fiendishly conspiring with the flames to extinguish everything that breathed. At times the smoke cloud was beaten down into the undergrowth, to rise again in choking columns.

She reached the rock, and clambered to the summit. Far away, and near the beach, she could see the forms of a man and a woman running toward a group of men who were standing near the edge of the water and gesticulating wildly. Rene and Todd were safe!

The woman on the rock whined feebly—not because of fear or despair. She knew that she was beyond their aid—they did not know her whereabouts, and to search for her in the face of the peril that was creeping closer and closer would be madness. Between her and the beach was a long stretch of dwarf trees and thick scrub.

There are moments when fear of death or physical pain reaches a limit beyond which is an abyss of utter indifference and insensibility. "Light-headedness" is not the word that rightly expresses that stage.

As the Honorable Betty turned her back on the sanctuary toward which no mortal hand could guide her footsteps, for the smoke cloud was rolling toward her with terrific swiftness, a strange ethereal light illuminated her face.

"Dying bravely on some unknown rock!" Her words to Sir Robert came back with startling vividness. This was the end. Ten, five minutes—and then the Shadow!

And as she was standing there, his figure stumbled, rolled from under the smoke cloud. She slid from the rock, and watched him, as the fascinated sparrow the hawk. He was stripped to the waist, his great, blackened arms were doubled back over his shoulders, where he held securely the body of the woman who had borne him. It was impossible to see his face, for his head was bowed beneath the weight on his neck. The collie, faithful to the last, was dragging itself wearily at his heels.

On he came, with sanctuary far ahead, and death racing up from behind.

And she, the other savage, went out to meet him. Oh! The exquisite thrill of that meeting, for now the tattered shreds of a despised modernism had fallen from her soul, leaving only the noble primitive.

"God help you, Malcolm Burke!" she cried aloud, and seeing her standing there before him, he laid his burden at her feet, and wiped the smoke and blood from his eyes.

"She is dead," he said, pointing at the silent, fire-charred heap. "It was she who fired the forest."

He stooped, and reverently kissed the lifeless lips.

"You might have saved yourself," the woman said, "had you not burdened yourself with the dead."

He stooped again, and carried the body to the side of the rock. And again he kissed the dead lips; then turned to the watching woman.

"Come," he commanded. "There is a lagoon three hundred yards away—to the east." He glanced at the approaching flames. "We may get through."

He locked his arm in hers, and to-

gether they ran. And when her strength failed her, and her limbs doubled beneath her body, when she cried out in a faint yet fearless voice: "Save yourself, Malcolm Burke!" he picked her up in his arms, and plunged bravely ahead.

The smoke encircled them, blinded them, choked them, but still he kept on, though his breathing was fast and labored, and thin red streams trickled from his ears. Twice he fell, and she with him, but no word of pain or despair passed his lips; rather was there a smile of defiance in his eyes.

And so they reached the lagoon, and he waded in, tired and bleeding, but radiantly triumphant. And as he held her there, her body submerged, her face shielded from the flying sparks by his own, he asked her:

"Are you afraid of death?"

And she answered him with equal calm:

"No—not now."

"Queen!" he whispered.

She closed her eyes.

The wall of flame fell—and passed. On the edge of the lagoon a muskrat squirmed convulsively, till its small, charred head touched the warm water.

Then the wind died as suddenly as it had sprung to life. The smoke lifted higher into the sky. A great silence lay on the island. The silence of desolation! Far inland the trunk of a half-burned tree snapped with the report of a pistol shot. A smoke-dazed gull, flying high above the lagoon, faltered in its flight, wheeled clumsily, smote at the air with wings and claws, and hurtled down into the waters.

The man in the middle of the lagoon raised his blackened shoulders, and stared across the waste.

"You are safe," he whispered to the semiconscious woman in his arms.

Tenderly he carried her to the bank.

She opened her eyes like a child awaking from sleep, and when they rested on his scorched face she cried a little, and sought to shut out the sight with her hands.

"Rest a while," he said; "then I will take you to your friends."

He turned aside, and looked across the bay where the yacht was riding at anchor. His head was thrown well back, his lips were parted, his massive chest was heaving and falling.

"And you?"

She had risen to her feet, and was standing before him. Her eyes were shining with a deep fire.

He pointed to the hill where once the house had stood.

"Alone?" She was looking full into

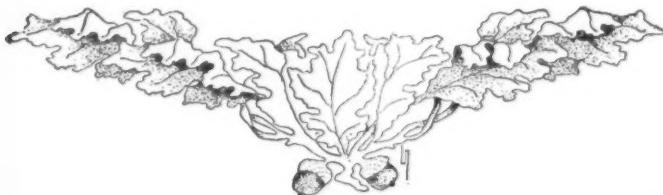
his eyes, and there was no mistaking their message.

"Yes, alone!" he answered. "See!" He pointed to the beach. "They are coming to take you from me."

"But I shall come back," she breathed, leaning forward.

He did not speak, just held her to him as a king his queen, daring the whole world to take her from him.

"Kiss me," she whispered laughingly. "You savage! My savage!"



## THE PATH WE NEVER TOOK

**W**HEN tender spring returns in waves her misty green to fling  
I mind me one who used to love  
The earthly spring.

One day I found a sweet new path through thickets by a brook—  
Clematis vines, wild apple trees,  
And then, our nook!

Her eyes shone blue with great delight; wood ways she loved to know.  
"Let's take that little path," she cried,  
"Next time we go."

But now where are her eager feet, her childlike eyes that shone?  
And I have not the heart at all  
To go alone.

How lavishly we let it drift, wealth that we counted not,  
Dear times together, days and places  
One has forgot.

If one had known—how could one know?—the end so soon to be!  
Oh, words unsaid, why must you haunt  
My memory?

When tender spring returns in waves her misty green to fling  
I mind me one who used to love  
The earthly spring.

FLORENCE WILKINSON.

# THE ONE UNDERSTANDING.

BY VIOLA BURHANS.



YOU wish to see me?"

Enid Sheldon hesitated in the doorway, and her eyes went unerringly toward her husband's averted face. For an instant, in the candle-lighted room, they seemed to encompass the man with deliberate tenderness; but when Kemp Sheldon turned and looked at her steadily, there was no trace of emotion in her return gaze. She stood before him serenely, a study in subtlety, her rather pale face baffling in expression.

"Yes," Sheldon replied, indicating that she was to be seated. "Before dinner is served, if I am not interrupting you, I should like to ask your opinion—on a matter of importance."

She inclined her head in assent, moving her chair a little, so that her face was somewhat in the shadow.

"I have been thinking about it more or less for the past month," he continued, unconsciously prodding the blotter on his library table with the blade of a paper knife, "and I've concluded that frankness is best between us."

He paused.

"I am waiting," she reminded him quietly.

He laughed nervously.

"It is not easy to say," he parried. "You, of course, remember those silly little Brockners whom we met at the Wickershams' last year?"

She assented.

"The most devoted couple I ever saw—outside of summer fiction. One

couldn't lift a finger without the other. If ever love had a right to last, it seems to me that theirs had."

"Well?" she questioned, tapping her slipped foot uneasily.

He gave an expressive shrug.

"Gresham told me the other day that she's out in Reno getting a divorce, and that Brockner's playing gay dog in New York; and doing very well at that."

Enid said nothing, but her slender throat quivered.

"I didn't ask the particulars," Sheldon went on equably. "I wasn't enough interested. The point that I wish to make is that the action could have been prevented, if they had taken it in time."

"I don't think—that I get your meaning," she said slowly.

"If a person is suffering from typhoid," Kemp elucidated, "does a physician wait until the crisis arrives before he gives any medicine? What percentage of cases could be saved at that late date? Take the Brockner parallel. If Dick and Alma had taken their first disagreement, or coolness, or whatever it was, in time—talked it over sensibly and tried to find a remedy for it—the chances are that they would be together to-day; which brings me back to what I started to say."

"Enid"—he shifted suddenly in his chair, transfixing her with his keen, searching gaze—"we are facing something which, unless we check it at once, before it gets any further start, will end in the usual tiresome, public way. Once

we know what the matter is, however, I'm inclined to believe that we may find the medicine."

He paused, as if awaiting her reply; but she merely continued to gaze at him in her direct, steady way.

"The trouble is just this," he flung out briefly. "I'm bored! I've been bored for the past month—with everything. With our home life, with you! No," as she started and flushed a deep red, "it is not any fault of yours in the slightest. You have been perfect; just that mysterious mixture of saint and sinner which first so attracted me toward you. The change, I'm convinced, is in me. Lately there's a sameness, a sort of deadness, in my love for you. Something's creeping in that's cool and matter-of-fact, that wasn't formerly there. You have noticed it also?"

The question jerked itself out resentfully.

"Yes," she admitted, her gray, unflickering eyes as expressionless as a stone face. "I have noticed it lately."

"A year ago, six months ago, our love was perfect. Why"—his voice unconsciously softened—"I trembled when I touched you. My idea of the world was a patch of desert—and you. If—"

"You need not enlarge upon that now," she intercepted quickly. "I remember. Go on, please."

"Then this undermining Something came. It took the edge off my love for you. It made its fine services mere habits. This past month I've been doing expected things in mechanical ways. I've lost initiative, motive, steam. Enid, I don't want to kiss you from habit, or to feel that it is possible to keep my eyes from you when you're in the room. Why, I used to start when I heard your voice unexpectedly, and, if you happened to touch my hand, I'd experience a flutter of indescribable sensations. Now, all that's gone. In other words, I'm getting used to you; and I don't like it. I can't see the justice of it!"

She looked up inquiringly.

"It's robbing me of the wonder of life," he continued, in passionate dissent, "and giving me nothing in return. There is no cause for it. You are as

charming as when I first saw you standing near that row of pink hollyhocks in the Wickershams' garden. More so. Just at this moment you look like—well, I'm no poet, Enid, but I'm jolly well sure that if one could see you now with that shiny, soft dress on, the candle-lights flicking little shadows over it, and your cheeks just pink enough to go with your hair——"

"You might save time by coming to the point," she interrupted, her voice cool and disinterested.

"You are right," he admitted. "Besides," impatiently, "to rhapsodize now over your charms is becoming more and more an act of pure intellect. I can do it, and keep perfectly calm. A year ago I couldn't. You know that. While I still see proportion, perfection, whenever I look at you, my feelings remain unstirred. Reason speaks continually in your favor, but my emotions say little in response."

"Little?" she repeated. "Or do you mean nothing?"

He looked at her curiously.

"By no means, nothing—yet," he averred. "That is what I fear, however; that in time there will be no response. And I wish above everything to avoid that.

"Why?" she asked simply.

Kemp again shifted his position. He had never before known Enid to be practically monosyllabic for so long a time.

"Because," he finally replied, "my emotional response once made for me the wonder of living. I believe it to be worth saving. I want you to believe the same. It is our most precious possession, and it is in danger. You must help me save it; help me fight for it if it becomes necessary."

Silence. Enid smiled, and played with a flower that she had subtracted from a near-by vase.

"That's why I'm talking it over with you," he went on earnestly. "I want your opinion, or suggestion. If we take this menace—or whatever it is that's threatening our happiness—in time, we may be able to check it. Otherwise, it will go on to its inevitable end; the same

sordid end that the Brockners are facing. There are several things we might do—”

Enid rose in interruption.

“Excuse me a moment, Kemp. I omitted to give Antoinette an important direction. I shall be back immediately.”

Once outside of the studio, she hastened to her rooms, her cold hands clenched tightly, her face as white as her dress.

“Madame!” exclaimed the startled maid, giving one look into her eyes. “Madame iss ill. I will at once get—”

“No! No!” choked Enid, waving her imperiously back. “It is nothing. I am quite well. I wish you to call up forty-two hundred and three Glenside, and get Mr. Harrison—Mr. William Harrison—on the wire. Then— Are you listening?”

“Yes, madame.”

“Tell him that Mrs. Kemp Sheldon wishes him to call her up at— What is the time, Antoinette?”

“It iss now struck five, madame.”

“At exactly ten minutes past five. Do you understand?”

The maid correctly repeated the direction.

“In the meantime, I am with Mr. Sheldon in the library, and am not to be disturbed.”

“Very well, madame.”

Enid returned, smiling inscrutably as she seated herself across from Kemp.

“So I bore you?” she questioned languidly, as he made no immediate attempt to resume their conversation.

Sheldon flushed. Somehow his assertion sounded very different, now that Enid voiced it in the form of a question.

“It is entirely my fault,” he hastened to assure her. “Perhaps I should not have spoken so frankly. I probably pained you unnecessarily.”

To his surprise, she looked up, and laughed.

“For blind conceit, for consummate egotism,” she said, speaking rapidly. “I have not known your equal, Kemp. You have never once asked me how *I* felt in this matter. You have been concerned merely with *your* emotions, *your* sensations; and I have let you talk. I

decided to say nothing, just to see how far your self-engrossment would carry you. If you had been less absorbed this month in yourself, you might have guessed the truth about me.”

Sheldon straightened suddenly.

“I am equally as bored as you. I’m bored until— Oh, Kemp, sometimes I think if you bore me another second I shall turn into a siren whistle and shriek!”

He rose stiffly, kicking back his chair.

“Under those circumstances,” he began, failing miserably to speak with the dignity he intended, “the least I can do is to take myself somewhere until we can adjust this matter to our mutual satisfaction.”

But Enid, still laughing, protested.

“How like a man!” she exclaimed, laying detaining fingers on his coat sleeve. “I didn’t leave you when you made your confession to me. Suppose I believe as you do, that the situation may still be saved?”

“Do you wish it saved?” he asked tensely.

“Oh, well, I see no harm in our trying out one of your suggestions. I admit that we were once happy together. If we could go back to that happiness perhaps—”

A servant entered.

“You are wanted at the telephone, Mrs. Sheldon.”

Purposely leaving the door open, Enid went into the hall and picked up the receiver.

“Hello! Is this you, Billy? How nice of you to call me up! Yes, I’ll confess I was facing a very dreary evening; but if you’ll wave your wand three times, and say ‘Come.’ Oh, that will be delightful! Kemp? How absurd! He and I are bored to death with each other,” laughing; “and he won’t care whence or whither you spirit me away. At eight-thirty? I’ll not keep you waiting. Good-by.”

“So nice of Billy Harrison!” she said, returning to Sheldon. “He couldn’t have chosen a more opportune time to take me to hear Farrar; for, after our mutual confession, I don’t fancy we

would spend a very enjoyable evening together."

"Apart from that," said Kemp stiffly, "do you think you were wise in saying what you did over the phone? You know, of course, that I couldn't help overhearing you."

"Well?" she interrogated icily. "I was not aware that I expressed any sotto-voce sentiments to Billy. Your own sense of fault magnifies the situation. But to go back to our problem. We must find a short cut to its solution, if possible; for, as it is, I'll barely have time to dress before dinner. What suggestion had you in mind?"

And Kemp replied:

"If I were you, Enid, I should not go out to-night. It is snowing, and—I fail to see that your cough is improving."

"Nonsense! You'll be suggesting next that I wear rubbers and fur earlaps. But you did not answer my question."

"No," he reflected. "The usual answers seem impractical in our case. If I admit that I see too much of you, which may be the difficulty, and decide to travel for a year or so, the probabilities are that then I'd see too much of somebody else."

"I should not object," she interpolated.

"Nor should I," he agreed. "Which, you see, would utterly defeat our purpose."

"We might try being 'strangers under the same roof,'" she suggested gayly.

He shook his head.

"Too much like a play. Besides, the servants would talk, and in the end that would mean publicity. No, the old solutions are overworked. I think we ought not to decide in a hurry. Suppose we agree to hold over our decision for a month or so."

"Very well," she consented, turning to leave the room.

"And, Enid"—he hesitated—"in the interim, I'll promise to—bore you as little as I can. It had not occurred to me that you considered me in that light."

She smiled.

"I may safely promise the same," she said, in parting.

Her promise was followed by a performance that, besides amazing Sheldon, left nothing further in that line for him to desire. Before a week had passed, he came to the conclusion that his wife knew of some magic way of keeping out of his sight, at the same time that she diffused her presence throughout every room which he frequented. He was conscious of her step in the hall, the soft swishing of her skirts arrested his attention. He interrupted his work only to catch tantalizing glimpses of her disappearing draperies.

Sometimes, because of the subtle, lovely fragrance in it, he would feel sure that his entrance had just caused her to retreat from his studio. She breakfasted with him not at all, and the few times that he dined at home, he was forced to be companioned only by the thought of a hastily written note explaining that she was attending upon some function with Billy Harrison.

At the end of three weeks, Sheldon's annoyance had turned into compunction, and then into alarm. The less he saw of Enid, the more Harrison's presence became its unwelcome explanation. The few words that he had attempted to exchange with her on the subject had not helped matters any. They had merely shown her to be, beyond a doubt, hard, cold—and more than ever desirable.

That attempt stood out in Kemp's memory. Hearing her step on the stairs, he had hastily opened his studio door, only to be confronted by a vision of slender elegance, a girl—for she was only a girl—wrapped in a long tan coat, a bunch of cream-colored roses in her arms, and some kind of shimmering scarf—he was at a loss to know its name—over her hair. For a moment he had stared silently, until she reached the lowest step. Then, in a tone of voice that brought a stain of color to her cheek, he had said:

"Enid, I think you have carried this far enough."

And she had replied evenly:

"Since we can find no pleasure in each other's society, I think it only fair that you do not interfere with my chosen way of spending my evenings."

That had been all. Giving him no time to reply, she had swept past him—a blur of color and fragrance. The door of Harrison's motor had closed curtly, and Kemp, having no choice, had reentered his desolated library. Over the blotter of his table, his head had dropped in his arms. He knew the truth at last. She was playing with *him*, not with Harrison. It was Billy she wanted, for all the rest of the long, long way.

At the end of another week he had decided. The close of a snowstormy, shut-in day found him prepared to tell her his conclusion. As if to spare him the pain of seeking her, once his decision was made, Enid herself came, a little later than the early shadows, and knocked at his door.

"Come," he directed indifferently.

He sat apparently in thought, his lighted pipe dying a slow, fragrant death from his listless handling, his eyes scowling grimly at an unopened book before him. The lights had been brought in, and the fire poked to that soft brilliancy which seems to give hovering, intimate aspect to familiar things in the room.

She came hesitatingly toward him; and Sheldon caught his breath as he gazed at her bare-shouldered loveliness. Her trailing gown of white chiffon, with its glimmer of faintest pink striking through, the glancing fire of the jewels about her throat, and the absurd slimness of her advancing satin slippers gave to her appearance a suggestion of mist—of the mist flower itself, seen through some shining ether. Her eyes, gray and inscrutable, met his own openly. He saw the imperious lift of her head, the young, red warmth of her mouth. Suddenly she seemed to him rich in temptation, in mystery. Instinctively he rose, his hand trembling as he knocked out his pipe.

"It is our anniversary night," she said, her voice personally vague, as if all day, shut in his studio, he had not remem-

bered and been lashed by that fact; lashed alternately by joy and pain as he recalled each of the hours that had given him then such a largesse of happiness. "And I thought, perhaps, you might care to see me—before Billy calls."

She hesitated.

He did not look up again; merely reseated himself, his groping hand closing over his pipe.

"He will call in twenty minutes. We are going to something or other. I think to Mrs. Compton's dinner, and tableaus. Billy calls them 'dinner tablets,'" laughing. "And this is such a dream of a gown, Kemp, I really felt you must see it!"

"I have seen it," he said briefly.

"Just one short, up-and-down glance!" she reproached him. "How can you be so indifferent to a perfectly good dress? You haven't even noticed those adorable pink silk knots on the front fold. Kemp, I command you to look at me!"

He obeyed. His even glance traveled from her hair to her slippers, lingering searchingly on her eyes. Then he rose and went over to a window, sliding the curtains apart and staring out at the snow-packed lawns.

"Well?" she questioned, biting her lip uncertainly.

He wheeled around.

"What do you expect me to say? But," with sudden accession of passion, "you shall have it. You—not the dress! That's only the covering. I suppose it's very stunning, very costly. Beyond that, it's a mystery to me. But *you*!"

He paused.

"You are an even greater mystery," he concluded finally, as she apparently waited for his words. "You are a woman beautiful, a queen! Are you satisfied, or must I stretch my imagination farther to meet your needs?"

She laughed softly, drawing his vacated chair up to the fireplace and swooping down suddenly into its depths. He came, and stared at her in silence, his brow furrowed, his eyes grim, as if he were etching in memory every line of her lovely face.

"Kemp"—her voice broke the growing stillness—"do you know that you said those very same words to me a year ago to-night?"

He started. The question pained him too deeply for any ready reply.

"I had sent for you," she went on, "just for our five minutes alone before the ceremony. Do you remember? Your face looked so different and white, and you were so nervous about your gloves, and everything. Until you saw me—I suppose I was very good for you to see just then, for I was feeling like a cool, long, beautiful prayer; one that God was just answering."

"Enid, what is the use—to-night?" he began huskily.

She lifted her finger in protest.

"Let me finish, Kemp. You came as close to me as you dared, for I had my finest flubdubbery on, and when I asked you how I looked, you said——"

"Don't, Enid!" he again intercepted. "You said, among other things, of course: 'You are a woman beautiful! A queen!' Yes, you did, Kemp. Those very words. And they were true, too, for I never looked better in my life than I did that night. Don't you remember—afterward, that time when your cuff button caught in a spray of arbutus in my hair, and you said——"

"I wish you would stop," he jerked out, pacing nervously about.

She looked at him reflectively.

"Am I boring you?" she asked finally.

His face stained an instant red.

"Enid, I must have been out of my senses when I said that to you. You have never bored me in my life. Never!" he emphasized. "The truth of the matter is, that I was bored with myself. I was living out only half of my life, neglecting my work, everything, for you. I made the mistake of thinking that love was the miraculous whole, instead of 'that better part' which alone makes the whole so wonderful. You know that for six months after our marriage I never wrote a line. Talk about the Brockners! Dick's obsession was nothing compared to mine. I didn't want you out of my sight a sec-

ond. In this way I finally turned, as I then thought, the reality of my love for you into an illusion. But it was a mistake, a lie, as I found out—when too late. It was never you who bored me. It was my own inactivity, the one-channeled course which I persisted in taking.

"To make it worse," he went on as she remained silent, "I was blind enough, fool enough not to realize that I was boring *you*. When you told me what you did that night, that there were times when I fairly made you want to shriek, it just seemed to me that something within me came to a stand. My real self stopped going in a straight line. I felt as if some one were stepping on me, wearily walking and walking over and over me."

"I know," she said quietly. "I felt that way—at first."

"At first!" he echoed bitterly. "I shall always." Then, catching himself: "No, I'll not say that. I shall take hold again—somehow. I've already reached a conclusion regarding our future. You may not have thought of it, but it's now nearly a month since we first talked over—our difficulty."

"I have thought of it," she replied. "What is your decision?"

"That there is but one fair thing to be done," he said, clenching his hands together under cover of his coat pockets. "Enid, do you wish your happiness?"

"Very much," she answered simply.

"Then there is only one decision possible."

"Yes, if we are both to be happy."

"I did not say that. I was thinking of you and Harrison. As blind as I've been in the past, I can't fail now to see how matters stand between you two. I've always known, of course, that Harrison worshiped the ground you stood on, but, until this past month, I never supposed that you cared a cheeseparing for him. I—I was a fool, I suppose. Say so, Enid. Don't spare me."

"You were—very foolish."

"At least," he said resolutely, "I can now make atonement. Harrison's all right, a good, square chap, and you—

any woman ought to be happy with him. This matter can be arranged quietly."

"You mean—my freedom?" she questioned faintly.

He nodded in silence.

"But I thought such action was the very thing you wished to avoid?"

"It was, so far as it concerned me. But I think rather too well of you to stand in the way of your happiness, now that I see Harrison can give you —what I couldn't."

Silence and deeper shadows settled down in the fire-lighted room. Enid's satin-shod foot reached out for the fender. Her slim hand caressed the small, white-shining pendant on her breast.

"But we didn't try first any plan to —save the situation," she said finally.

"That is my plan," he answered. "It will save the situation."

"For Billy, perhaps. But for us?"

He laughed harshly; then as suddenly sobered.

"I'm afraid our desires are no longer the same. Naturally, I prefer to consider yours first."

"And, naturally, I prefer to consider yours," she replied, the softest suggestion of obstinacy in her tone.

He stood in front of her.

"Enid"—his voice at last was all tenderness—"you're a good sort to consider me like that, above your own happiness. But you must know, of course, that I can't take advantage of your kindness or pity. I once had your love. I didn't know how to keep it, or to keep from boring you——"

"Oh!" she intercepted. The word sounded like a cry.

"So there is justice, at least, in my losing you. You mustn't think of me. I'll get on—somehow. Very well at that, if I know you are happy."

"But if I am miserable, perfectly miserable, Kemp——"

"Why this sudden exaggeration?" he questioned, checking a straining impulse to take her in his arms.

Enid pouted out an irrelevant reply:

"Billy Harrison is forty years old."

"I have known men to be older," Sheldon admitted.

"He is some sort of a relative, on dad's side."

"Very distant."

"He twangs continually about Art, and insists that I should know a Correggio from a Turner."

"Well?"

"And he will *not* talk at dinner until after the salad."

Sheldon suddenly became serious.

"Enid," he said tensely, seizing her soft shoulders in his tempered grip, "what are you trying to tell me?"

"That Billy Harrison's a mothy old piece of moss, and that I think it very ill-bred of you to make me call anybody names; and that——"

A servant knocked, and entered.

"Mr. Harrison is calling, madame," he announced.

Enid hesitated for the briefest second. Then:

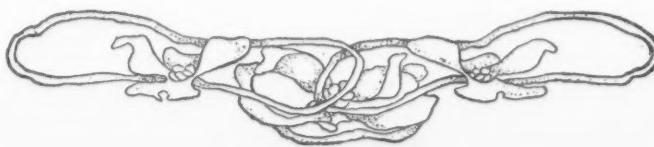
"You may tell Mr. Harrison that I am dining at home to-night," she directed.

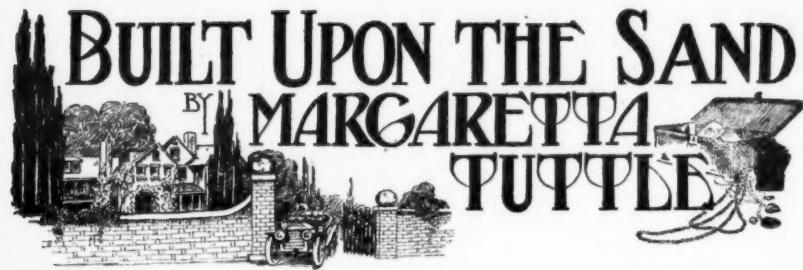
The man withdrew.

Enid rose, confronting Kemp's white, set face. Very alluring she seemed, her cheeks warm with firelight, her sweet eyes even high with his own.

"You meant to send him away?" Sheldon murmured, as if fearful that the direction just given might have been a mistake.

"Always," she whispered, "the very moment you came back to me. Your return was to be his *congé*."





# BUILT UPON THE SAND

BY MARGARETTA TUTTLE

**A**NNE HAMELTON," said Gardiner to the woman he had taken in to dinner, "the time is coming when your adventuring is going to give you a nasty shock. It goes beyond mere courage. It is reckless."

"Courage is the foundation of all character, Brian," said Anne, the overtone of laughter that made her voice a remembered thing carrying it to the man in spite of the cheer Sheffield Wayne's toast had roused.

"But recklessness is not courage," objected Gardiner.

"What is it, then, Doctor-Man?"

"Lack of judgment; and judgment is the highest and last intellectual development."

"Ah, I have you there, Brian. I invariably exercise judgment in my venturing."

Gardiner looked at a certain magnificent young man across the table, who apparently could not take his eyes off Anne, and shook his head.

"Not there," he said. "Don't you know, Anne, after all your experience with men, that such perfection as that across the way is too good to be true? No man can look like that without having something the matter with him."

Anne suddenly did the unexpected thing. Gardiner had turned to watch her look over the man across the way with the look she used when she was drawing the charming figures for which the publishers and the editors paid her so high a price—the look that made her clever face infinitely more clever, with its slight narrowing of the eyes for perspective, and its intent intelligence.

Gardiner called it Anne's pricking up of ears when she scented game. But instead, Anne turned to him, and bent on him the diretest of probing eyes.

"Don't you suppose, Doctor-Man, that I know that? One finds it out trying to put reality into pictured faces, as surely as one finds it trying to cure sick nerves. But it is what makes faces, yes, and nerves, interesting—that we are bound to have the defects of our virtues and the virtues of our defects. Without it there would be no eternal 'perhaps' to making friends; no subtlety to living. Take this Greek god across the way—do you mind if I call him G. G. for short? When I first looked at him, in faultless evening dress at one of Sheffield Wayne's other dinners, I said it cannot be real—this thing that my eyes are registering. I shut them for a moment, saying no man could be six feet two with just the shoulders and head to match, and that if he were, his nose could not be so straight, or his chin so strong. Nor could such a superb body move with such grace.

"But I was quite mistaken. He has all of these things. Even his skin is beautiful. He dances as lightly as Mordkin, and yet moves with the dignity of a bishop. And his teeth are not bad, and he knows Ibsen from Maeterlinck, and Whistler from Gerard. He is intelligent; and you know, Brian, when I say intelligent, I do not mean the intellectual graveyard type that buries other people's wit and lets you read the tombstone over it. Of course, when I've said that, I've included that he knows how to behave."

"You are hard hit once again, Anne.

Such a defense portrays your enthusiasm more than Kingsbury's excellence."

"Nonsense! If I loved him, I would not defend him. That I loved him would be defense enough."

Gardiner turned his eyes away from her, because, as she spoke, a slow blush spread over her face. She understood his movement perfectly, and kept silence a moment.

"Then," said Gardiner at length, "if you can find no compensating drawback to all this perfection, either physically or—or culturally—"

"Culturally?"

"Pardon my coinage. I will not use your term intelligent as applied to Kingsbury—and I think you are confused in your use of it. He is cultured—not intelligent."

Anne mused on the distinction. Gardiner continued:

"How about possible moral drawbacks?"

Anne frowned.

"How can a woman find such a flaw as that in a man who comes to her, anxious to please?"

"Exactly. That is one of the things I meant when I prophesied a nasty shock to you some day from your venturing. Women cannot—"

"Oh, wise male!" scoffed Anne. "Neither can men know all there is to know about other men."

"What are you going to do with him?" said Gardiner. "Something will have to be done with a man who looks at you that way."

Anne blushed again.

"I am going to put him in all my new pictures."

"Oh, a Hamelton man!"

Anne frowned.

"Then I am going to study him a little longer. I am a bit fastidious about men, and my requirements are high. I have a fancy for perfection. So, if I find there is no drawback, if he is as perfect as he seems—I shall marry him."

Gardiner's face grew grave.

"Make your study long enough, and sincere enough, Anne. I know, of course, that you are artist enough to be

deeply interested in such perfection of contour. It is rare, and it is astounding."

"You mean I am woman enough."

"You are that, too, thank God! Be woman enough to value other things than beauty. There is a flaw there—find it!"

A little glint of anger sharpened the woman's gray eyes to steel.

"How do you know so much?" she asked.

"He is a patient of mine."

Anne let a sharp exclamation escape her.

"Never, with that superb physique!"

"You have a trained eye, Anne. Watch his fingers a bit."

"I won't spy."

"Ah, I thought you were going to watch a while before you decided."

"I am, but not that way."

"What way?"

Sheffield Wayne spoke to Gardiner across the table:

"Gardiner, I am having a house party next week at Sheffield. April is delightful on the coast. But no house party is complete without a doctor. Will you come?"

"I'll drop in on you, Wayne."

"Everybody here is coming," their host continued. "You said you would come, Miss Hamelton?"

"Surely," said Anne calmly. Then she turned to Gardiner: "That is where I propose to study my G. G. A house party is an affair of intimacy."

"Next week," mused Gardiner. "The fifteenth is Thursday. Kingsbury will not go."

"Will not go? Why, he promised to go."

"Nevertheless, he will not."

"You speak very positively, Brian."

"Yes."

"Well, let us see."

The girl leaned forward. She had no need to catch the young man's eye.

"Mr. Kingsbury, are you going to Sheffield?"

"Yes, indeed, Miss Hamelton." His voice was not quite as perfect as his face, but it was not unpleasant. "I would not miss it for the world."

"You are really going—on the fifteenth, over the week-end?" said Gardiner almost casually.

A sudden strained look touched the man's face into a new expression, remained for an instant, and was gone.

Anne's eyes narrowed, focusing him.

"I—I had not thought of that—of an engagement—I will have to see," said Kingsbury.

Anne's face grew cold.

"I thought you had quite decided."

"But—I really—"

Anne turned sharply to Gardiner, dropping the subject. In a few minutes, when Kingsbury's partner had engaged him, Gardiner said to Anne:

"Well, what was the expression with which he greeted my reminder—you who draw expressions and study faces?"

"It was fear," said Anne quietly.

Gardiner gave her an admiring glance. There were not two Annes in his world.

"And you said courage was the foundation of character?"

The girl made no answer, studying the face across the table. Then she said:

"He will go to this house party—no matter what his engagement is."

"He will not go," said Gardiner.

Anne's eyes caught fire.

"He will. I will ask him to—for my sake."

"He will refuse—for your sake."

"Brian"—her voice came sharply—"tell me this thing you are suggesting."

"No, I cannot tell you. He is my patient."

"Suppose I insist on marrying him."

Gardiner spoke slowly:

"I—do—not—believe he will ask you to."

The girl's voice cut like a cord:

"You underrate my attractiveness."

"You know quite well, Anne, that of all men in the world, I do not."

She sped her insult, looking down at her plate:

"Then you assail a suitor of mine merely because he is a suitor."

Gardiner looked down on the bent brown head.

"That would keep me a bit too busy to practice medicine, Anne. You have

so many suitors. Besides, this is scarcely an attack. It is merely—"

"A brutal, suggestive thing of thin air one cannot fight or run from."

"You can do both, Anne. I hope you will."

The dinner was at an end. The guests rose.

"You are going to Sheffield?" said Anne to Gardiner.

"Yes."

"Then you shall see. The G. G. will be there."

"I think not, Anne."

"We shall see."

The exigencies of Gardiner's profession made it necessary for him to leave Sheffield Wayne's dinner party a half hour after dinner. As he prepared to go, he saw Anne Hamelton in earnest talk with Kingsbury. Gardiner stood at the door a moment, watching them. He was close enough to see the young man's embarrassed protest and Anne's insistence. It flushed Anne's face and deepened the gray of her eyes. She was bewilderingly beautiful. It might well be that Kingsbury would find her irresistible.

It was no surprise to Gardiner to have Kingsbury come to his office a few days later with the announcement that he was going to Sheffield over the fifteenth, and that he wished, while there, to employ Gardiner professionally.

"Have you ever done a thing like this before?" said Gardiner.

"Never since I discovered that this Thing overtook me at such regular intervals that I could prepare for it."

"Why do you do it now?"

The young man hesitated.

"Well, really, doctor, I have no option in the matter. It is just one of the things a man has to do occasionally. The Thing comes on about two o'clock in the morning. It does not last so very long. Each time I hope it will be of shorter duration. I had thought that perhaps I could remain in my room pleading sickness, and that you would stand by me. You could give me a hypodermic."

Gardiner looked at him intently.

"Are you in the habit of using morphine for these occasions?"

"Not unless the accident of my surroundings requires concealment. I have tried in every way to build up my health and not to destroy it, hoping that the excellence of my physical condition would triumph over this hereditary taint. I have gone into all kinds of athletics. You see for yourself the result. I am, so far as I know, in excellent physical condition. I should not like to jeopardize this by acquiring the morphine habit; but this house party is an unusual combination of circumstances."

"I should think," said Gardiner, "that it would be much easier for you to stay away altogether."

"That is impossible," said Kingsbury. "Please let us consider the other alternative. I believe you said you would be there. May I engage you professionally for that day or two?"

"It is a good deal to ask," said Gardiner.

"I know," Kingsbury answered. "I couldn't ask it of many other men. Of course, I am quite ready to pay any bill you may render for such services. Also, as you know, I am quite able to do so."

"If I refuse?" said Gardiner.

Kingsbury thought a moment.

"Then I shall have to take down some doctor or other who will go as my valet —some one of the young medical students who needs the money."

"You will not give up the project of going?" Gardiner urged.

"It is not that I will not. I cannot."

Gardiner turned his desk chair so that he faced the young man more squarely.

"I suppose you know, Kingsbury, that it would be utterly wrong of you to marry?"

Kingsbury did not meet the doctor's eyes. He looked down at the floor in silence while his face slowly whitened. When he spoke, it was haltingly:

"These attacks are of brief duration, and in the nature of delusions. They are never violent. If the woman I married understood that it was merely a nervous illness that overtook me periodically, I do not see why she need mind. At all other times I am perfectly

normal. I have a large income. I can give a woman all she could ask for; and, even if this Thing were to get worse, my wife need not suffer from it."

"Kingsbury, your family history, from which you are at this moment suffering, ought to show you that you have no right to send a Thing like this down through future generations."

"But I am in perfect health, and the woman whom I wish to marry is splendidly well and strong. It is a little bit too pessimistic to suppose that, should we have children, they will be anything but normal."

Gardiner had a quick vision of the beauty of the picture he had seen as he left Sheffield Wayne's house the evening of the dinner there—Kingsbury tall and strong, his actual beauty enhanced by the embarrassed protest of his face; and Anne equally beautiful, and aglow with the imposition of her will upon another. Kingsbury's argument might have had weight with Gardiner if it involved a woman less talented and less brilliant than Anne. The world was full of ordinary women to whom such a marriage as Kingsbury proposed would be entirely acceptable, but Anne had genius. She was an artistic success. She could choose a husband from among the real men of the world. She might become the mother of sons and daughters the world needed.

It seemed to Gardiner a frightful thing that such a woman should undertake the risk of marriage to a man with a hereditary taint of the blood; that she should accept the possibility of having to spend her young womanhood caring for children who might at any moment develop any form of insanity or neurosis. Yet, on the other hand, it was so impossible to prophesy about influences so subtle that, as a physician, he was not justified in prohibiting marriage to Kingsbury. The most he could do was to advise, though he believed that his long and intimate friendship with Anne gave him the right to make his advice to her as urgent as it could be.

Yet the fact that Kingsbury was his patient made him wish that Anne might find out the state of affairs elsewhere.

"Do you not think, Kingsbury, that it would be fairer to any woman you hoped to marry to tell her about this before she commits herself?"

Kingsbury considered this a moment. Then he said:

"I do not think I could tell a woman such a thing about myself unless I knew she cared for me."

"It would be a little late then," said Gardiner; "but better to tell her than that not at all."

Kingsbury rose as if the discussion bored him.

"I do not believe I can talk over these matters with you, Gardiner. They are a little bit too intimate, and it does not seem quite fair to the lady. Will you undertake to look after me at Sheffield?"

"Yes," said Gardiner, a little grimly. "What day do you go down?"

"Miss Hamelton and I are motoring down with Mr. Wayne himself on Tuesday."

"I cannot come so soon, but you will not need me before Thursday—or Friday—if the usual Thing occurs. You still have hopes of escaping it?" asked Gardiner.

"Yes, I always hope that it will not come again. Yet that does not release me from providing against it. I can count on you, then?"

"Yes," said Gardiner. "I shall be there."

A house party is an affair of intimacy. Gardiner acknowledged the truth of Anne's statement a half hour after he had reached Sheffield's charming Long Island place. Gardiner came down on the train late Wednesday evening, when the only other passengers to get off were two young men, who stood at the station watching him while Wayne's chauffeur tucked his traveling bag into the car and chatted briefly of the assemblage.

"They're waiting for you, doctor. They are acting charades to-night, and they told me to hurry with you. They certainly have turned things upside down in the house. Reilly, the house-keeper, is fair distracted. The ladies

leave their things everywhere, and then make a fuss about not finding them. Reilly picked up Miss Hamelton's pearl necklace in the hall this morning; and lucky she did, or we'd have all been under suspicion. Reilly says she hopes these parties will make Mr. Wayne see the need of a wife."

"He seems to have chaperons enough, Brooks, and, with a good housekeeper, he probably won't find his need pressing."

"Mrs. Morris is chap'roning this party. And she is kept busy, too—real busy. We all are."

Gardiner had not been in the house ten minutes until he saw why they were all kept busy. Philandering seemed to be in the air. Every nook held its interested man and woman. Two by two they strolled on the bluff overlooking the sea, or sat in hammocks on the veranda more publicly, or chatted in the library.

And Sheffield Wayne regarded it all with the tolerant eyes of the overbusy, oversilent man, arranging diversion for himself that he could escape at any moment.

"Well, Gardiner," he said, "there is no illness in the house yet, but we feel safer with you around. Sorry you could not come sooner."

Anne met him, radiant and alluring in the success she had made of her share of the house party.

"I wish I had made a stiff wager with you, Brian, on Ralph Kingsbury's coming. He has not only come, but seen—and almost conquered."

"I do seem to have lost, Anne."

"What made you so certain, Doctor-Man?"

Gardiner looked at Kingsbury coming down the hall toward them. As he looked, Sheffield Wayne stopped Kingsbury a moment to talk to him, and Gardiner had time to make an observation or two. He got the impression of some subtle change in the man. It was as if a veil had been drawn over the bright regularity of his features, blurring their outlines. The skin was more colorless than usual; it was almost pasty. The eyes were set in darkened rims. Faint

lines lay across the forehead. The square shoulders sagged a trifle.

Anne followed Gardiner's eyes.

"He—he has had no chance to sleep. We have had so much gayety," she said gently. "And this friendship with me is becoming a bit serious to him. He is taking it adorably. See, Brian, it is, after all, one of the hardest things in the world to believe that one is loved. Words are such untruths when great things must be put into them; but looks are not. I would rather have a man look as this one does now than tell me a hundred times."

As she paused, Gardiner turned back to her.

"Oh, Anne, Anne! You are bolstering up some secret fear of disbelief. You are doing what we doctors do when we do not believe the patient's own account of himself. We hunt for corroborating signs."

Anne gave him the frightened look of one whose privacy is unwarrantably intruded on.

"Am I not right?" said Gardiner.

"Yes, a little," said Anne; "just enough right for it to worry me. As you probably know, my trouble with men is to hold them off, not to draw them on. But this particular man responds only to strong stimuli. I cannot quite understand it."

"It amazes me, Anne, that you, of all women in the world, should be content to do the wooing."

A hot flush of indignation mounted to the girl's forehead.

"That is hardly what I am doing. Yet, if I chose, there is no reason why I should not do it."

"You are quite right. You are self-supporting, and occupy an influential position. Such women do have more liberty in the choice of a husband. There is less excuse for their making a poor choice."

"You always get back to that, Brian. I have had three days here with this man. Strung out over the one or two calls a week a man may make on a woman, it would have taken us several months to progress as far as we have

in intimacy. I am more than ever convinced that my choice is a good one."

"Methinks the lady doth protest too much," said Gardiner lightly, as Kingsbury approached them.

"What do you mean?" said Anne.

"I mean if you were really sure you would not trouble to convince me. It is yourself you are convincing."

Kingsbury gave the doctor a comprehending look as their hands met. To Gardiner's simple "How are you?" he made the significant answer, "All right, so far."

Gardiner left him with Anne, and went upstairs to put on his evening clothes. As he was about to leave his room, Kingsbury knocked and entered. The two men looked at each other in silence.

"You look badly, Kingsbury. You'd better cut and run. There is a night train back to town at twelve-thirty. Why don't you take it and go to the hospital for a couple of days?"

"Now, less than ever, I should be absolutely unable to explain it."

"Nonsense," said Gardiner, "a man can explain anything."

"He cannot explain his suddenly running to town when he has asked a girl to marry him, and she has said she will answer him the next morning. Especially when her suspicions as to something queer are already aroused."

Gardiner turned away to the window, and was silent a moment. Then he wheeled on the young man.

"You cannot have asked a girl to marry you with no explanation of these matters."

"I will explain them after I find out if she cares enough for me to marry me."

"It is not honorable," said Gardiner briefly.

Kingsbury flushed.

"Nobody could say that to me but you, Gardiner, and you know I cannot quarrel with you to-night when I need you so badly. You are taking advantage of me."

"I will take a greater advantage of you, then," said Gardiner, "if you do not tell Miss Hamelton that you are

subject to attacks of periodic insanity before you obtain her promise to marry you. I shall tell her."

"You cannot tell her," said Kingsbury. "You violate a professional confidence if you do. Talk about dishonor! Nothing could be more dishonorable."

"It is a matter of interpretation," said Gardiner, "but I might as well say at once that I would violate almost any professional confidence rather than see such a woman make such a mistake. Moreover, Kingsbury, if she should marry you, ignorant of this insanity, the marriage could be invalidated at almost any time."

The other man's face was distorted with anger. He seemed to be doing his utmost to gain a self-control difficult to find.

"I tell you, Gardiner," he broke forth violently, "if you stand between this girl and me, I will break every bone of your body. This is not your affair."

"I will give you," said Gardiner quietly, "until twelve o'clock to-night to tell her yourself, and if you do not, you will see whether or not it is my affair." Then, as Kingsbury made a threatening motion, Gardiner concluded: "Get yourself together. By the look of your skin and eyes, and your whole figure, this periodic attack is already threatening you. You had better go downstairs and speak to Miss Hamelton at once, and then go back to your room and stay there until it is over."

Kingsbury drew back, and every drop of color seemed to have ebbed from his face. He stood quietly a moment, his eyes haunted by the fear Anne had first seen in his face at Sheffield Wayne's dinner. Then, without a word, Kingsbury flung the door open, and went downstairs.

The charades had been finished for some minutes when Gardiner arrived. They were to be followed by a german that Gardiner found in progress when he came downstairs. Anne was leading with Kingsbury.

Gardiner stood at the door of the drawing-room with Sheffield Wayne,

and watched the intricate figures that the dancers carried out with grace and precision. The shimmer of jewels and silks, the gayly colored favors, the laughter and the music should have caught any onlooker's fancy. Their host watched it, smiling, but Gardiner had eyes only for the two leading.

Anne seemed troubled and watchful of her partner. Into Kingsbury's face the dancing had brought no added color. It looked almost haggard.

"King is ill," said Wayne, watching him. "He ought to quit this, but I suppose he will not while Miss Hamelton stays. He is pretty hard hit."

Gardiner made no answer, for the time he had given Kingsbury to tell Anne about himself was nearly over, and Gardiner knew there had been no opportunity in this gay dancing to tell her a thing like this.

If Anne had any close men relatives—but she had not, and the career of Kingsbury's father, who died in a sanitarium after an erratic and stormy life, was not a thing she could know.

As he stood watching them, Gardiner's practiced eyes discerned things about Kingsbury that troubled him as a physician. When he had first come to Gardiner, Kingsbury had called his attacks nervous. Gardiner had taken him through three of them before he made up his mind that it was psychasthenia, and not neurosis.

Periodic insanity is comparatively rare, but it was not unknown to Gardiner. He had had patients with recurrent mania of many years' duration who had shown no signs of their trouble during the intervals between their attacks. The attacks varied in the different patients, but the intervals between them were approximately of the same duration; the attacks themselves were of the same duration; and each one almost an exact repetition of the other.

Kingsbury's affliction came on him with great regularity, usually at that time in the morning that has been called the hour of birth and death, when a man's temperature and vitality are at the lowest. It was accompanied by a delusion that rarely varied. Kingsbury

believed during the somewhat brief season of his attack—rarely over twenty-four hours—that his feet were brittle, and he could not walk on them. He called them glass, and could not be persuaded to use them. It was a harmless delusion, necessitating merely his being put to bed until the attack was gone; but the trouble with these things was that, at any stage of periodic insanity, melancholic symptoms might persist.

Gardiner had hesitated over telling Kingsbury his diagnosis, hoping to benefit him by hypnosis; but Kingsbury himself had admitted, before his last attack, that he knew the Thing he was fighting was of graver significance than a nervous trouble would have been. He was so entirely normal between his brief attacks; he took such excellent care of his health; and he could tell with such precision when he was about to be overtaken by his trouble, that he believed he might lead a life as normal as any man leads who is suffering from a minor ailment that he has to take into account.

Gardiner looked at Kingsbury waltzing with Anne, at the grace of his movements, the perfect poise and rhythm of his body as he danced; and he thought of him as he had seen him, crumpled and impotent under the iron fingers of his delusion. Gardiner's heart was heavy within him.

He encountered Kingsbury on the way to the supper that followed the german.

"Well," said Gardiner quietly, "do you or I fulfill your task?"

Kingsbury stopped with a hard look at Gardiner.

"Have I not made it clear to you that if she is not to marry me there is no need of my betraying myself to her? It is not a thing I wish to tell—needlessly. Therefore, I wait for her answer, and you shall also wait."

After supper, Kingsbury disappeared with Anne in the deserted library, and Gardiner did not see them again until Wayne and Mrs. Morris rounded up the party for bed, and Johns, the butler, began to lock up the house.

The other guests had gone upstairs when Kingsbury and Anne came out

into the hall where Gardiner stood with their host. Kingsbury looked white and worn.

"Wayne," he said, "I have one of my fits of insomnia. I shall not be able to sleep for some hours. Do you mind if I sit in the library and read?"

"No. Help yourself. You will find brandy and soda on the buffet. That will help you."

Anne stood on the stairway pitifully. To her Kingsbury seemed to be suffering because of the suspense she was imposing on him by waiting to give her answer until the next day. Gardiner, who caught both the pitiful glance and the hesitant yielding that followed it, came between her and Kingsbury, as he stood in the library door.

"Anne, you are exhausted. You will not be able to draw for a week. Why not go to bed?"

"Yes. I am going," said Anne. "Good night. We have had a charming evening, Mr. Wayne."

Gardiner waited a moment to see if Kingsbury needed him, but Kingsbury sat down before the book-laden library table, and did not even look at Gardiner. The doctor went upstairs to his room, but he did not undress. He knew very well that Kingsbury was so angry with him that he hoped that he would not need him. He wondered if Kingsbury was not trying to fight it out alone downstairs.

Gardiner paced the floor, considering the fight the other man was making with the odds all against him; and when an hour had gone by, and Kingsbury did not come upstairs, Gardiner opened his door, and moved softly down the dim stairway, through the dark hall toward the shaft of light that came from the open library door.

Anne had not gone to bed, either. The thought of the white face of the man in the library, who could not sleep because of her, haunted her. It was such a useless thing. She meant—to marry him, yes. Why should she not tell him so—now—to-night?

Why, it was already the next day—the day on which she had promised to give her answer. It was two o'clock.

Anne stood a long time at her door facing this step she was about to take, thrilling to it. She would go down now and give her answer. She opened her door and crept noiselessly to the stairway.

A curious sound greeted her, a sound as of silent struggle, the sweep of bodies striving for advantage; then a cry, smothered almost before it rose.

Anne flung herself down the stairway with no other thought than that of reaching what she saw in a shaft of light from the open library door. On the floor, two men were battling for the possession of a revolver, clutched in the fast-held hand of the uppermost man. With sickening fear, Anne saw that the man beneath was Brian Gardiner; the other was a stranger. As she sprang forward, she was brought to a moment's pause by a figure at the library table that the open doorway framed in light.

It was Kingsbury, seated in a chair watching the struggle before him with strained eyes, yet making no movement to help. Fear chalked his face and quivered through his shaking fingers, yet he sat unmoving while death crept nearer.

"Ralph!" cried Anne. "Ralph!"

Kingsbury's eyes passed to Anne, but he did not move.

"Brian!" said Anne.

Then, leaning down, Anne grasped at the strangling hand on Gardiner's throat with the strong, trained fingers of her right hand, while with the other she wrenched the revolver away from the fingers that held it so close to Gardiner's head. It fell on the rug beneath her. She felt Gardiner exert the strength the release of his throat brought back, and she exerted all her own power to help him.

And even as she did so, a man's figure came from the dining room, put down its burden, crept forward, and flung her from her hold. She found herself struggling blindly with this new force.

"Ralph!" she gasped. "Ralph, they will kill us!" Then a hand covered her mouth.

Still her eyes strained toward the figure in the chair in the broad shaft of light. She saw it, paralyzed with fear, make what seemed to be a supreme effort; saw it totter to its feet, and move gropingly to them; past Gardiner still struggling on the floor of the hall; past herself, held in a grasp that seemed to be suffocating her; and at the foot of the stairway, it crumpled and fell.

And the last thought Anne had, as unconsciousness came upon her, was that Ralph—was running away; the man she had come downstairs to accept as husband was running away.

When Anne opened her eyes, she was on the library couch, and Gardiner was bending over her. Out in the hall, the roused household was clustered, waiting. Anne stared up at Gardiner, her fingers at her throat, trying to recall why Gardiner's face should be so white and bruised.

"Drink this, Anne," said Gardiner.

She swallowed the brandy and water, and waited a moment. Memory surged back over her. She turned her head on Gardiner's arm.

"Tell me, Brian," she whispered.

He bent lower over her.

"Can you not wait until you are better, Anne?"

"I cannot wait, Brian. Tell me."

"Your cry roused Wayne, Anne. He reached us barely in time, and brought the whole household to our assistance. One of the men escaped, but they have the other. They came for some of the famous jewels they knew the guests were wearing for this german. They were waiting until—until—Kingsbury went to bed."

"Where—is—Ralph?"

"I had him taken upstairs. Wayne thinks he has been injured in the struggle, so do the others. Shall we not let it rest—so?"

"Yes. Brian?"

"Yes, dear."

"Was Ralph— Brian, what was it about Ralph?"

"It was the flaw, Anne. Now will you go to bed? You have made a brave

fight. I will tell you anything else you may wish to know to-morrow."

"You will tell me about—Ralph tomorrow?"

Gardiner hesitated.

"Had you promised to marry him, Anne?"

The girl covered her eyes a moment. She shivered a little.

"I was coming downstairs—to tell him—that I would marry him. But I—I cannot marry—a coward. Yet—oh, Brian, it is so incredible! The woman he loved—and he would not come to her defense! This is something worse than cowardice."

"Yes, Anne, it is worse. And yet it is better, because it is something he cannot help, a power greater than the man himself. Yet he did fight it. He did what he has never been able to do before. In the grip of an overmastering force, under which he has heretofore been unable to move, he walked from the library to the stairway. But I cannot tell you about it now, Anne. Tomorrow, when you have rested, I will try to explain it to you."

"No," said Anne. "Ralph himself shall tell me."

Anne uncovered her eyes. Gardiner saw that they were full of tears.



## MANHOOD

**S**LEEP and wake and work,  
Work and sleep and wake,  
Ever the same old irk,  
Ever the same old ache;  
The ache of a weary heart  
That cries for the road it knew,  
For the trail without a chart,  
For the path without a clew.

But I have fought it down—  
The fever to go and go—  
I'm bound to the roaring town  
And the crowds that ebb and flow;  
But the old-time memories hold,  
And the old-time voices call,  
Till I almost break from the fold  
And follow the trail and all!

Sleep and wake and work  
Day after dreary day,  
Penned in the city's murk  
Far from the wander-way;  
Yet, when the day is done,  
Yet, when the night birds trill,  
Rovers all—I am one  
For I dream of the roving still!

BERTON BRALEY.

# The FRIGHTENED ENIGMA

by THOMAS P. BYRON



**W**HEN a million dollars strikes into the pockets and destinies of a young man who spansks a typewriter in a newspaper office for twenty a week, it is liable to do egregious things to aforesaid young man and aforesaid destinies. But, as a general rule, it doesn't turn the happy, devil-may-care knight of the stylus—or of the keyboard, rather—into a morose, grief-blighted man of leisure and independent income. Yet that is what it did to Armoys.

When his father had carelessly gone broke, and died of ensuing chagrin, Armoys, who had never labored other than after big game or on the hurricane deck of a polo pony, had gotten out and delivered the journalistic goods for twenty per week very cheerfully. There was a girl whom he had once almost promised to marry, who gave his self-esteem quite a jolt when she dropped him, but even that didn't bother Armoys much. She would have been an elephant on his hands if she *had* stuck to him. What could he have done with a girl like that on twenty per? And the twenty per at that writing was only twenty perhaps, instead of twenty per week. But he regretted her, nevertheless, as lads who have too much imagination will.

It was when a million unexpected came to him from a fifth cousin, unheard-of, and when the girl tried to make it up with a diplomacy that bordered on genius—she was only eighteen, too—that Armoys became a hermit and a wrecked life, trusting neither the hand

of man nor the cheek of woman, and went to Paris, not—not to *faire la noce*, as they say in both hither and farther Gaul, but to entomb himself in loneliness and revel rapturously in gloom. For that is the contrary way of lads of Armoys's peculiar strain of Celt, and they can't help it.

Sometimes he regretted the typewriter, but never the girl, for the simple reason that he could have her if he wanted her, and he knew it.

His days he spent curled up in a morris chair in his luxurious apartment in the Place D'Iéna, reading Poe, and De Maupassant, and Théophile Gautier; his nights of insomnia he tramped the forlorn desert of the outer boulevards, eschewing and beholding from a sneering distance the hilarious glare of the Quartier De L'Opéra, of Montmartre, or the once-desired Latin Quarter, that shone, softened to an alluring rose tint by curtains of rain and mist, against the leaden January sky.

However, there are duller ways of killing time than prowling about the suburbs of Paris; and duller places, too, for it is a sort of fringe between the palpitating city and the peaceful country that possesses a fauna and an atmosphere all its own; and in the wee hours it was a sort of No Man's Land, where Armoys, marching in solitude, caught at times a deep glance into life—a glimpse of a single picture, as it were, from a film of tragedy, comedy, or despair.

One night, down by the Porte De Saint-Mandé, he thrashed a couple of

fellows who were annoying a girl. He did the job well and whole-heartedly, and when they had fled, and he turned to receive the applause such classic workmanship deserved, the audience—or the girl—was ungratefully gone. It was like *Hamlet* turning his back upon the play within the play, and Armoy was vaguely disappointed. An hour later he had his recompense.

It was three o'clock of a morning of mist and icy rain, and he sat before a deserted brasserie of La Villette, drinking coffee reeking with cognac.

Suddenly a claw thrust something that flashed dully on the table before him, a voice whined "*'Vous voul' sachez-ter!*" and he looked up to see a furtive, abject creature in streaming rags, who seemed an incarnation of the dismal night and of hopeless misery.

The thing before him was a locket.

Armoy thrust forth a tentative five-franc piece. The man seized it avidly, and fled.

Armoy picked up the locket.

"Come back!" he called, reaching in his pocket, for he knew by the weight that the thing was of gold, and worth at least one hundred francs as bullion.

But the wretch clapped hands to his ears, and vanished into the murk.

Another would have thought him mad, but Armoy was hardly surprised, although he conjectured that the trinket was stolen. He examined it carefully. It was oval, of cunning but evidently savage manufacture, and was of soft, heavy gold. On each side was a face in relief—a puzzling face. As he studied it, it looked like a negro, then like a Japanese, then again like a Malay. But there wasn't a single feature on which he could put the point of his finger, and designate black, yellow, or brown. It looked like all three, but every atom of it looked like all three. And there wasn't a shadow of a thing about it that even remotely suggested the white.

Inside the locket, which was made to contain a miniature, there was only a tress of black silken hair—evidently a woman's.

Armoy smiled at the sight of it, and also at the thought that for the one

time in his life he had received something for nothing—for the locket came to him for a tithe of its value, so small that it was practically a gift; he was as a sort of receiver of stolen goods. And as he tramped home from La Villette, lonely and weary as Poe's Man of the Crowd, he wondered if the strangeness of its acquisition was an earnest of other strange things to follow.

It was an adventure, and if it only proved to be sufficiently depressing Armoy felt that he could enjoy it to the dismal end.

One afternoon, some ten days later, as Armoy was going home up the Rue Pierre Charron, he was stopped by a stranger. It was a little, dark, stout, alert individual, with that curious air of importance that is the hall mark of exiguous officialdom. He was a type of the petty government employee, and of most ordinary appearance, but it was his manner that was extraordinary.

His black, piercing eyes rested on Armoy with smothered fury, and his voice shook with an excitement he could not conceal.

"You are Monsieur Armoy," he said accusingly.

"I am," answered Armoy.

"You have in your possession a certain locket, monsieur. It does not belong to you, and you must return it. I am acting as the owner's agent in this matter, and I advise you to hand the article to me immediately."

"What makes you think I have such an article?" began Armoy.

"I know you have it, monsieur," interrupted the little man furiously. "You are Monsieur Armoy, who lives in the Place D'Iéna, and you are an American millionaire. You are also a scoundrel! Do you understand that? A scoundrel! Now, give up the locket immediately. You do not know with whom you have to deal."

"I have such a locket," replied Armoy, "and I am willing to return it to the owner. But there are a few things that must be explained first. There was no one present when I obtained it, save the person from whom I obtained it,

Since then I have carried it with me constantly, and have shown it to no one. So I would like to know, monsieur, how you knew that it is in my possession?"

The stranger seemed about to explode.

"I learned of it from that very person," he hissed. "Now, Monsieur Armoys, it is a locket with a very curious head in relief on both sides; it is of gold, and of about one hundred francs value, and it contained nothing but a lock of hair. You see, it is the same. Now will you give it up?"

"I will give it up to the owner only," answered Armoys angrily. "Send him—or her—to me. If he—or she—can prove ownership, I will give it up to him—or to her. Do you understand me? Is that plain enough?"

"I understand you," said the stranger ominously. "You are certainly a great scoundrel. Have a care, monsieur, you will meet some you will not care to see in your midnight prowling. I warn you for the last time. Give up the locket or—something very unpleasant will happen to you."

"Ah," said Armoys, "you threaten me. Very well; we shall have an explanation now."

He reached for the stranger, who eluded him. The man's rage dropped from him like magic, and was replaced by a terror that seemed hardly justified by Armoys's clutch at his arm. White with fear, he fled down the street, tumbled into a passing taxicab, and whirled around the corner of the Avenue De L'Alma toward the Seine.

Armoys, watching, and stupefied at the man's causeless and abject fright, suddenly realized that he had been hasty, foolish, and unreasonable. There was evidently a mystery about the locket, and he had obscured it further, instead of clearing it up.

The next day he received a *pneumatique* that ordered him, under threats of the direst punishment, to leave the locket outside his window that night. Armoys lived on the ground floor, and his windows opened directly on the place, being separated from the sidewalk by a high-barred iron fence. He

placed an American twenty-dollar gold piece as bait, and watched. Early in the morning it was snatched by a man who reached through the bars, grabbed it, and fled so quickly that, in spite of Armoys's alertness, he was unable to capture or even get a glimpse of him.

The day brought another *pneumatique*, with more threats, but saying nothing as to the surrender of the locket.

Armoys's tramps through the rain had netted him a bad cold, and he went to bed that night after his concierge had administered a rousing dose of quinine and whisky. He kept awake for a time, reading, and at last he took the mysterious locket from under the pillow where he kept it of nights, and studied it attentively—the puzzling face and the tress of hair.

Then it seemed, as he lay there dreaming, that a girl came and stared at him. She held a candle in her hand, and its yellow light cast a luminous pallor over her face. She approached slowly, her eyes wide with a transcendent terror, and he wondered what hideous thing she saw in him, and why she came if it were so terrible. She trembled, and he could hear her gasp. He made frantic efforts to speak and reassure her, but his tongue was useless; he strove to stretch out his arms, but they were powerless.

And then he was awake, sitting up in bed, and staring into the darkness, a frightened face dancing before his eyes as if the image of his dream still lingered on his waking retina. One hand held something clutched tight, and when the other stole under the pillow and pressed the electric-light pear, flooding the room with light, he saw that it was the locket.

He did not even remember extinguishing the light. There on the bed lay the weird romance he had been reading, "*L'Inconnu*"; he arose and tried the doors, found them locked, and rang for his concierge, who did not come, which was not strange, as it was half past three.

He went back to bed—to think of the face of his dream until it fled, blurred

and unrecognizable, into shadowy regions, and then he was awakened again by his concierge pounding at the door with *café au lait*.

And then the face came back again, clear and distinct of outline, with the assurance of one who has come to stay, and it seemed to open the door to a chamber within himself that was previously unknown, and to wait there—a white, girlish face that asked him questions out of frightened eyes.

"If you're a real girl I'll find you all right," said Armoy absently.

"Did monsieur speak?" queried the concierge.

"Nothing, Pierre. But what is this—a letter?"

"*Oui, monsieur.* It did not come by the post, but was pushed under monsieur's door."

Armoy opened a small white envelope addressed to himself.

Within was an American twenty-dollar gold piece, and the following, written on a scrap of white paper in English, in a small, delicate hand:

You may keep my locket for me for a while, Monsieur Armoy.

Under the impetus of these occult events Armoy, recovered from his cold, definitely abandoned the profession of misanthrope. It had become a trifle wearisome; and, besides, deserted streets of dismal nights were no place to look for a girl. For he was looking for a girl with a frightened face—the Frightened Enigma.

He looked industriously and everywhere, and whenever he saw an exceptionally pretty damsel he stared at her so hard, hoping to recognize *the one*, that had it been elsewhere than Paris he might have had his head punched. Sometimes it seemed to him that she was merely a phantom, made in equal parts of the brain haze resultant of whisky, solitude, quinine, the uncanny tales of Paul Hervieu, and the too active imagination of Francis Armoy, Esquire, but there always remained the palpable facts of the locket, the little note in English, and the threatening man.

This latter Armoy saw about a month later, and chased like a rabbit for three blocks down the Boulevard Des Italiens. He was as frightened as before, and equally as elusive. Armoy's futile search was in a fair way to turn him back again into the desolate paths of misanthropy when he found her.

It was in the last place in the world that a man of too much imagination would look for the girl of his dreams—in the Bois De Vincennes, of a Sunday afternoon.

She sat on a bench by the Lac Des Minimes, and when he saw her his throat went suddenly dry, he felt a lightness in the back of his head, the roof of his mouth throbbed with strange, new pulses. It is a vital moment for a young man of too much imagination when he comes suddenly face to face with the occult and the girl of his dreams at one and the same time.

He studied her avidly. Yes, it was undoubtedly she.

So wonderful was it to Armoy that he stared for a good five minutes before he realized such details as that her hair was blond, her eyes hazel, that she was young and slim, and dressed very plainly in black. Also she shivered now and then under the raw wind that swept down the leafless alleys, and Armoy felt an emotion come over him that left his eyes stinging.

Why, she was only a child, a slight, delicate child, who seemed tired, and lonely, and unhappy, and cold. But heavens! How pretty she was! Even a man of no imagination at all would have caught his breath a little bit at her beauty.

And she was annoyed at his scrutiny, for she had risen, and was leaving.

Armoy stepped forward with determination.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "may I speak to you a moment?"

She turned and looked at him, neither frightened nor annoyed, and flushed a bit. At the direct gaze of her eyes, Armoy crushed down a wild impulse to seize her in his arms.

"Why do you wish to speak to me, monsieur?" she asked.

"I hardly know," said Armoy insanely. "But you seem lonely. And I am lonely, too. I am alone in Paris, and I would like to talk to some one."

She looked at him, smiling faintly, an enigmatic look in her eyes.

"Very well, monsieur," she said calmly. "You may accompany me as far as the Porte De Picpus, if you like."

Armoy's heart pounded as he walked beside her, watching her exquisite profile and her half-pleased, half-amused smile; and before they had gone the short distance to the Porte De Picpus he had managed to tell her his name and to give a short and not unflattering synopsis of his life history. And she had laughed three times, smiled at him shyly once, and had told him nothing at all when she stopped suddenly, and said abruptly:

"You must leave me now, monsieur."

"Then I can come no farther?"

"No."

"Mademoiselle, you have been so kind as to allow me to speak to you. I have told you my name and all about myself because I wish to—to become your friend. Am I going to see you again?"

The girl gave him a long look.

"I shall be by the Lac Des Minimes next Sunday at four o'clock," she said, with a catch of her breath, as one who does something desperate.

"But you have not even told me your name!" cried Armoy.

"My name is Jeanne," she said softly.

Then, with a little laugh, she was gone.

Armoy, lost to honor, basely spying from a distance, followed, and watched her enter an apartment house in the Boulevard Soult. Shameless bribery drew from the concierge the information that her name was Jeanne Laboret, that she lived with Monsieur and Madame Laboret, her uncle and aunt, on the third floor, and that she worked in a printing establishment on the Rue Auber.

In the sleepless watches of the following night he wondered that he had said nothing to her of the locket, and of his dream. Then he suddenly realized that Jeanne Laboret's hair was gold in-

stead of the raven hue of the tress of the locket, and that he had ascertained that she did not understand English. So she was not the girl of the locket, after all. Nor had she been in the least bit frightened. But she was the one he had dreamed of, just the same. And the following weeks proved her to be an enigma.

By a strange coincidence Armoy discovered that he needed some calling cards the next morning, and the purest of accidents sent him to a printing establishment in the Rue Auber, where he was vastly astonished and pleased to encounter Mademoiselle Jeanne Laboret. Mademoiselle Laboret may have been astonished, too, but her pleasure she concealed under a demeanor of ice, cut him dead when he would have spoken to her on the street after the day's work, and suffered a girl with a humpback to wait upon him on two unnecessary visits he made during the week to give details concerning his cards.

Judge, then, of the astonishment of the man of too much imagination when she greeted him with a dazzling smile and outstretched hand at Vincennes the following Sunday. He was so dumfounded that *she* did most of the talking that time, developing astonishingly as an enigma.

Armoy, who was no doubter, was willing to take it from the poet that a flower can bloom on a muck heap, and if a muck heap, why not a tenement of the Boulevard Soult? But little Jeanne Laboret had all the earmarks of an indoor bud; for, granted that refinement and gentle manners may be natural gifts, education and knowledge of, and adherence to, the tenets of the social elect can come only from the hothouse environment.

Therein lay the mystery of her. For a while Armoy was so put to it to further acquaintance with her that he worried little over it, and then, when she let down the barrier, and admitted him to intimacy, he was in that supernal state of mind where he worried little over anything in the universe save whether he was going to win her or no.

For she was elusive, and proud, and scornful, and kind, all at once; and though she wore shabby clothes, and worked ten hours a day for thirty francs a week, she had Armoy jumping every time she pulled the strings, and begging her to marry him on an average of three times a week.

Armoy stood it for quite five weeks, which was a long time for a Celt of too much imagination.

One evening he took her home from the Rue Auber. It was in latter March, and it was raw and cold outside, hot and stifling in the crowded stage. Jeanne was pale and tired, and wilted, in the abominable place, like a sensitive flower. Never had Armoy seen her look so young and frail. He felt a furious rage at her stubbornness, her refusal to ride home in his car, which he had haled forth from the garage now that the hermit business was done and over with.

When they came out in the cold at the Saint-Mandé Station she gasped and shuddered.

"Jeanne," he said gravely, "you know I love you. I have told you often enough, in spite of the fact that you only laugh at my declarations. You are not strong enough to work, and it hurts me bitterly to see you as miserable as you are to-night. You must either marry me now, and let me take care of you, or I will go away to-morrow and never see or bother you again."

The voice of the man of too much imagination was tense, and she listened to him, white-faced, seemingly too tired to either laugh or resist.

"I believe you *do* love me," she said wearily. "Otherwise, why should you wish to marry me? And you are sure you will not change your mind?"

"Never."

"Remember. You know nothing of me. You know the people I live among, and that is all. And they are not of your class."

"Nothing can make any difference."

"And just for myself—for what I am—you wish to marry me?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I will marry you. For I love you, too. And I am so tired."

"Jeanne!" he cried, seizing her by the arm. "Oh, dear Jeanne! Have I won you at last?"

She nodded, smiling at him forlornly through the tears in her eyes.

"I knew you would," he cried exultantly. "Jeanne, all your resistance was in vain. Dear girl, there is something between us that you know nothing of."

They had reached the house in the Boulevard Soult, and she stopped short when he would have climbed the stair with her.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Jeanne, do you know that I saw you in a dream before I had ever seen you in the flesh? Why should a thing like that come to me if you and I were not made for each other?"

He pulled out the locket, and showed it to her. He told her of how it had come to him, of the man who had threatened, and of his dream of her.

"But who could have written the note telling you to keep it?" she asked.

"I don't know, Jeanne. To tell the truth, I have hardly thought of it lately. My thoughts have all been for you. I only showed it to you because indirectly it was the cause of my dreaming of you. At first, you know, I thought you might be the girl of the locket. But her hair is dark, while yours is light. But what is the matter, dear?"

Armoy's sweetheart's face was white with terror.

"Are you ill?" he cried. "Why, Jeanne, that is the way you looked when I saw you in my dream."

"It is nothing," she said faintly.

She took the locket from his hand.

"May I keep this for a few days?"

"Certainly."

"I will send it to you in a few days. And you must not come to see me until I do."

"Why, you have just promised to marry me, dear. And now you are sending me away. I don't understand you."

"I have promised to marry you, and I will keep my word. But you must

promise not to come to see me until I send you back this locket."

"Anything you wish," said Armoy bravely. "But tell me, Jeanne, do you really love me?"

"I really love you. Good-by."

Armoy went home with his head in a whirl.

For two days he was full of gorgeous dreams. Then his locket came back to him again.

The tress of hair was gone, but within was Jeanne's picture. With it was the following note:

MY DEAR: I have taken your unknown lady's tress of hair, and put in place of it a picture of little Jeanne *en souvenir*. My dear, I have something to say that I fear will hurt you, and make you angry. I have promised to marry you and I will—but at the end of a year. I loved you all the time, and for that reason I told you nothing of myself. I wanted to see if you would love me in spite of my ugly surroundings. You did, and I love you for it.

But I am afraid—afraid of you because you have too much imagination. You think there is something occult about your dream of me, and you think that it is that which marked us for each other. So, you see, I fear that it is not little Jeanne that you love so much as it is the romance. To find a girl who had come to you in a dream—that is what captivated you. There is nothing occult about it, dear. You had seen me twice before that day at Vincennes. And you had forgotten, that is all.

At the end of a year if you still want me I will come to you. That will be time enough for you to be sure. But now I am a little too young—and I am afraid. But I love you, remember that, *I love you*.

I am no longer at either the Boulevard Soult or the printing place, and you will not be able to find me. Good-by from your frightened

JEANNE.

Armoy was stunned. He had dreamed of her because he had seen her twice. In God's name—where?

He thought of a year—a year in which Jeanne worked, and was unhappy, and wore shabby clothes as he had seen her do. A whole year! He must find her.

But although Armoy hunted high and low he did not find her again. There was not a single channel of search that he neglected, but all was in vain.

After two months of frenzy, he sat down to wait in a sullen despair. He

thought of her—sweet, and frail, and gentle—fighting valiantly with the world for a living, of how he had wooed her in the turmoil of the streets and in her dingy home, of how bravely and cleverly she held about herself the mantle of mystery, and he knew that the chamber within him, in which she sat and waited, with frightened face lest he forget and change, was one to which there was no exit, and his heart burned at the thought of all the disasters that a year might hold.

"Romance be damned!" he would mutter bitterly. "It's *you* I want, Jeanne."

Armoy was not unaccustomed to start up out of troubled sleep, and imagine that once again a frightened face was looking at him in the candlelight. But this time the arc light in the place outside shone brightly in through his window, between the blinds that stood ajar, and it shone on a face that was black and yellow and brown. The face of the locket!

One of Armoy's hands crept under the pillow for a pistol, the other seized the light pear. He pressed the bulb, and the room was alight.

He pointed the pistol at a little man, whose brown face was gray with terror.

"Well?" said Armoy. "Who are you?"

"I am Anantsy, monsieur," quavered the man.

"And what is your name and degree?" cried Armoy, springing out of bed. "Quick, what is your country, and where are you from?"

"I am a Malagasy, monsieur?"

"And what are you doing in my room?"

"Monsieur, please do not be severe. I only wanted to get it back to her. I have not dared face her since it was lost. It was my fault."

"You were after this?"

Armoy showed him the locket.

"Oui, monsieur. She wanted it so badly, and you would not give it up."

"To whom does it belong?"

"To Mademoiselle Deraismes. She

is my master's daughter. It was he who brought me from Madagascar when he was a soldier there."

Ar moy took the Malagasy, and tied him hand and foot with the bed sheets. He thrust him into a clothes closet.

"Where does Mademoiselle Deraismes live?" he demanded.

"Quite near here, monsieur. In the Rue Yvon-Villarceau, number eleven."

"Well, Monsieur Anantsy, of Madagascar, in the morning I am going to call on Mademoiselle Deraismes. If what you say is true, I will let you go, and restore the locket. If you are lying, I will hand you over to the police."

Ar moy went to bed and slept—not soundly, but better than he had done since Jeanne had disappeared.

The next morning at nine o'clock a girl hurrying out of a house in the Rue Yvon-Villarceau ran straight into the arms of Ar moy, entering.

Ar moy did not release her.

"Jeanne! Jeanne!" he cried. "Is it you? Oh, Jeanne!"

And Jeanne clung to him, sobbing.

"I am so glad—so glad! But how did you ever find me?"

She pushed him away, and looked up at him.

"I was looking for Mademoiselle Deraismes," he said.

"Well, I am Mademoiselle Deraismes," she said, with a smile.

"Then the locket is yours?"

"Yes."

She took it from his hand, and opened it.

In an opening he had not suspected were the pictures of a man in uniform and a woman whose face resembled Jeanne's, though her hair was dark.

"My father and mother," she explained. "But come."

He followed her within the house.

"Jeanne," he cried, "you must tell me everything. Where had I seen you before—?"

She interrupted him, smiling at his mystification.

"Everything. First, this locket. My father got it in Madagascar, where he was a colonel in General Gallieni's ex-

pedition. When he died a year ago he was bankrupt. I had no friends or relatives, and I was obliged to go to work and live with Monsieur and Madame Laboret, who had once been our servants. I was in a convent school then, and I could have been a nun, but you see I thought perhaps if I went out in the world I might meet *you*—do you understand?

"Well, one night, the locket was brushed from the window, where I had laid it, to the street below, by Anantsy. When I ran down to get it there were two men there, and one of them had the locket, and wanted to kiss me before he would give it up. Then *you* came along, and thrashed them both."

"Was that *you*?"

"No one else. I fled, and about a week later your concierge, Pierre—he also used to be one of our servants—told Monsieur Laboret that you had the locket in your possession. We thought you were one of the men who had insulted me, and Monsieur Laboret tried to make you give it up. Oh, it is so funny, his methods were very melodramatic—he reads too many stories in the daily papers.

"But you would not surrender it, so the night that Pierre had given you so much whisky and quinine he opened the door so I could go in and take it. He and Monsieur Laboret were waiting in terror outside. When I went in I saw that it was you, and you sat up straight in bed, and stared at me with eyes wide open. You were asleep, but I was so scared I ran out and closed the door.

"So I sent the coin that Anantsy had snatched from your window back to you, together with permission to keep my locket. I wrote in English to puzzle you. Was it grammatical? And poor Anantsy! Since he failed to get the locket he has not been back. But I forget. You do not know Anantsy."

"On the contrary, I met him about three o'clock this morning," answered Ar moy.

And he took the Frightened Enigma—who was now neither an enigma nor frightened—in his arms.

# THE EPISTLE TO ICHABOD



## JOSEPH C LINCOLN.

**I**SUPPOSE you can always get up an opposition party. There was one among the Children of Israel in Moses' time, and there's been plenty ever since. So long as somebody has got somethin', there'll always be somebody else to want to get it away from him. That's human nature; and there's as much human nature in Ostable, size considered, as there was in the Land of Canaan.

I'd been postmaster at Ostable for quite a spell. I didn't try for the position. I was mad when 'twas given to me. There wasn't much of anything in it but a lot of fuss and trouble, and I'd said forty times over that I wished I didn't have it. But when the gang up at the West End of the town set out to take it away from me, I rared up on my hind legs, and swore I'd fight for my job till the last plank sunk from under me. Don't sound like sense, does it? It wa'n't—'twas just more human nature.

'Course, the opposition wa'n't large, and 'twasn't very influential. Old man Phipps and young Ike Hamilton was at the head of it, and they had forty or fifty West Enders to back 'em up. Phipps had been one of the leadin' workers for Abibus Payne, the chap I beat for the app'intment in the fust place; and young Hamilton was junior partner in the firm of Ichabod Hamilton & Co., Stoves, Tinware, and Fisher-

men's Supplies, a mile or so up the main road.

Young Ike—everybody called him "Ike," though his real name was Ichabod, same as his uncle's—was a pushin' critter, who'd come back from a Boston business college, and had started right in to make the town sit up and take notice. He was goin' to get rich—he admitted that much—and he cal'lated to show us hayseeds a few things. Up to now he hadn't showed much but loud clothes and cheek; but he had enough of them to keep all hands interested for a spell.

His uncle, Ichabod, Senior, was a shrewd old rooster, with twenty thousand or so that, accordin' to his brags—he was always tellin' of it—he'd put away for a "rainy day." We have considerble damp weather at the Cape; but 'twould have taken a Noah's Ark flood to make Ichabod's purse strings loosen up. That twenty thousand dollars had growed fast to his nervous system, and when you pulled away a cent he howled.

Young Ike was the only one that could mesmerize the old man into spendin' anything, and how he did it nobody knew. But he did. Since he got into that stoves and tinware firm, the store had been fixed up, and advertisements put in the papers, and I don't know what all. The uncle had been under the weather with rheumatism for a year; maybe that explained a little.

Anyhow, 'twas young Ike that picked

himself to be postmaster instead of me, and he and Phipps got the West Enders—fifty or so of 'em—to sign a petition askin' that a new app'intment be made. I couldn't be removed except on charges, so a lot of charges was made. First, the post office, bein' in the Ostable Grocery, Dry Goods, Boots and Shoes, and Fancy Goods Store, was too far from the center of the town. Second, I was neglectin' the office; and my assistant, Mary Blaisdell, was really doin' the whole of the government work. There was some truth in this, because Mary knew a good deal more about mail work than I did, and was as capable a woman as ever lived; and, besides, Jim Henry Jacobs, my partner, and I were so busy with our store, and the "Windmill Restaurant" that we'd taken over, and a lot of other ventures, that I had left Mary to run the post office. But it was run better than any post office ever was run afore in Ostable, and everybody with brains knew it.

Third—But never mind the rest of the charges, they didn't amount to anything. In fact, there was so little to 'em that, when the West End petition went in to Washin'ton, I didn't take the trouble to send one of my own, though a hundred folks asked me to, and said they'd sign. I just wrote to the post-office department, and told them that I was ready to submit my case, if there was any need for it; and that if they cared to send a representative to investigate, I'd be tickled to death to see him. They wrote back that they'd look into the matter, and that's the way it stood when the lost-letter affair run me, bows fust, onto the rocks, and turned the situation from ridiculousness into something that looked likely to be mighty serious for me.

It come about—same as such jolts generally come—when I was least ready for it, and all alone. Jim Henry Jacobs, my partner and sheet anchor in case of trouble, had got married, and gone away on a honeymoon trip to the West Indies that would last two months. 'Twas January, and none of my influential friends among the summer folks was on hand to help. No, I was all alone, and sailin'

free with what looked like a fair wind, when "Bump!"—all at once I was half full of water and sinkin' fast.

That mornin' the mail was a little mite late, and there wa'n't any store trade to speak of. Mary Blaisdell was in the post-office place writin', the usual gang of loafers was settin' around the stove, and I was out front talkin' with Sim Kelley, who lived up to the West End of the town, among the mutineers. 'Twas from Sim that I got most of my news about the doin's of the Phipps and Hamilton crowd. He was a great, hulkin', cross-eyed lubber, too lazy to get out of his own way, and as shif'less as a body could be and take pains enough to live.

"Sim," says I to him, "I thought you said old man Hamilton was in bed with his rheumatiz. I saw him up street as I was comin' by. He looked pretty feeble, but he was toddlin' along on foot just the same. I cal'late the old critter wouldn't spend enough money to hire a team if he was dyin'."

Sim was surprised, and not only surprised, but seemingly a little mite worried. Why he should be worried because Ichabod was takin' chances with his disease I couldn't see.

"Old man Hamilton!" says he. "Is he out a cold mornin' like this? Where was he bound?"

"Don't know," says I. "He stopped into the drug store when I saw him. Whether that was his final port of call or not I don't know."

He seemed to be thinkin' it over. Then he got up and walked to the door.

"He ain't in sight nowhere," he says. "Guess he wa'n't comin' as far as here, tain't likely."

"Well," says I, "how's the rest of the family? The hopeful leader of the forlorn hope—how's he?"

"Ike?" he says. "Oh, he's all right. He's a mighty smart young feller, Ike is."

"Yes," says I, "so I've heard him say. Gettin' ready to stand in with him when he gets my job, are you, Sim?"

That shook him up a mite. 'Twas common talk around town that Sim and

Ike was pretty thick. He turned red under his freckles.

"No, no!" he sputtered. "'Course I ain't. I'm standin' by you, Cap'n Snow, and you know it. But, all the same, Ike's a smart boy. He's gettin' rich fast, Ike is."

"Sold another cook stove, has he?"

"He sells a lot of 'em. Sold two last month. But that ain't it. He's got foresight and friends in the Stock Exchange up to Boston. He's buyin' copper stocks, and they—"

He stopped short. Thought his tongue was runnin' away with him, I presume likely. But I was interested, and I kept on.

"Oh!" says I. "He's buyin' coppers, is he? Well, where's he get the U. S. coppers to do it with? Is Uncle Ichabod backin' him? Has the old man's rheumatism struck to his brains?"

"'Course he ain't backin' him! *He* don't know nothin' of stocks. He ain't up to date, same as Ike. But he'll be glad enough when his nephew makes fifty thousand. When he finds that out he'll—"

"He'll never find it out on this earth," I cut in. "If he found out that Ike made fifty dollars, all on his own hook, he'd drop dead with heart disease. If he didn't, everybody else in town would. But it takes money to buy stocks, don't it? I never knew Ike had any cash of his own."

"He's in the firm, ain't he? And Hamilton & Co. are— Hello! Here comes the depot wagon!"

Sure enough, 'twas the depot wagon with the mail. I took the bags from the driver and went back to help Mary sort. I'd taken to helpin' her a good deal lately. She said there wa'n't any need of it, but I didn't agree with her. I hadn't figured out what was the matter with me—except, maybe, that I was an old fool; but, somehow or other, I always felt more contented with life when I was alongside of Mary.

We sorted the mail together, puttin' it in the different boxes and such. And almost the fust thing I run across was that registered letter addressed to "Ichabod Hamilton, Jr." 'Twas a long en-

velope, and up in one corner of it was printed the name of a Boston broker firm. I laid it out by itself, and went on sortin'.

When the sortin' and distributin' was over, and the crowd had gone, I called to Sim Kelley. We didn't have rural free delivery then, and Sim carried the West End mail box; that is, a lot of the folks up that way chipped in and paid him so much for deliverin' their mail to 'em.

"Sim," says I, "there's a registered letter here for young Ike Hamilton. If I give it to you, will you be careful, and see that he signs the receipt, and the like of that?"

He was outside the partition, and he come to the little window and took the letter from me. He acted mighty interested.

"Gosh!" says he, grinnin'. "I wouldn't wonder if this was— Humpf! Oh, I'll be careful of it, don't you worry about that."

Just then Mary called to me. I went over to where she was settin' at her desk.

"Cap'n Zeb," she whispered, "I wouldn't send that letter by Sim. It is important, or it would not be registered, and Sim is so irresponsible. If anything *should* happen, it would give Mr. Hamilton and the rest such a chance. And they have accused us of bein' careless already."

They had, that was a fact. One or two letters had gone astray durin' the past six months, and the loss of 'em was described, with trimmin's, in the West End charges and petition. And Sim was a lunkhead. I thought it over a jiffy, and then I called to Kelley once more. He was just comin' to the hooks by the door outside the mail-box racks, where Mary, and me, and the store clerk hung our overcoats and hats. He'd hung his coat there that mornin'.

"Sim," I said, "let me see that registered letter of Ike Hamilton's again, will you?"

He took it out of his pocket and passed it to me.

"All right," says I. "You needn't bother about this. I'll send a notice by

you that it's here, and Ike can call for it himself. I won't take any chances of your losin' it."

Well, you'd ought to have seen him! His face blazed up like a Fourth of July tar barrel.

"Chances!" he sung out. "What are you talkin' about? I cal'late I'm able to carry a letter without losin' it. I ain't a kid."

"Maybe not," says I, "but you ain't goin' to lose this one, kid or not. Here's the notice all made out."

"Notice be darned!" he snarled. "You give me that letter. Hamilton & Co. pay me to carry their mail, don't they? And, besides, Ike told me particular that he was expectin'——"

He pulled up short again.

"Well?" says I. "Heave ahead. What's the rest of it?"

"Nothin'," he answered, ugly, "but you've got no right to say I can't carry a letter when I'm paid to do it. As for losin' things, there's others besides me that lose mail in this town."

There's no use arguin' when a matter's all settled. I handed him the notice and walked off, leavin' him standin' outside that partition, sore as a scalded cat.

I looked at my watch. 'Twas twelve o'clock, my dinner time. I walked out to the hook rack, took down my overcoat, and put it on. I had the Hamilton letter in my hand. There wan't any reason why I should be more worried about that registered letter than any other, but I was, just the same. Maybe 'twas because 'twas Ike's, and he was so anxious to make trouble for me. Somehow or other, I couldn't feel safe till he got it and signed the receipt. I thought for a minute, and then I decided I'd walk up to Hamilton & Co.'s and deliver it myself. That decision was foolish, maybe, but I felt better when 'twas made. I put the letter in the inside pocket of the overcoat I had on, and, just as I was doin' it, Mary Blaisdell come out of the post-office room, with her hat on.

"Oh," says she, "are you goin' out, Cap'n Zeb? I thought——"

Then I remembered. She'd asked to go to dinner fust that day, and I'd told her of course she could. I begged her pardon, and said I'd forgot. I'd wait till she got back. So, after makin' sure that I didn't care, she took her coat from the hook, put it on, and went out.

I took off my overcoat, and, just as I did so, somethin' fell on the floor. I stooped and picked it up. I swan to man if it wa'n't that pesky Hamilton letter! Thinks I: "That's funny!" I put my hand into the pocket where it had been, and there was a hole right through the linin'. Now, if there's one thing I'm fussy about, it is that my pockets are whole. And I knew this one ought to be whole. So I looked at the coat, and I'm blessed if it was mine at all! 'Twas Sim Kelley's. Both coats had been hangin' together on the hook rack, and both was blue and about the same size. I'd been saved by a miracle, as you might say.

I was comin' to feel more and more as if there was some sort of fate about that registered letter. I took it back into the post-office room, handlin' it as careful as if 'twas solid gold, and laid it down on the sortin' bench behind the letter boxes. And then somebody spoke to me through the little window.

"Cap'n Zeb," says Sim Kelley, "there's a man just drove over from Bayport to see you. Come in Gabe Lumley's buggy, he did. His name's Peters, and Gabe says he's got some sort of government job."

"Government job?" says I.

And then it flashed through my mind who the feller might be. The post office had said they might send an investigator. I didn't care for that, but I did wish Sim hadn't seen him.

I hurried out of the post-office room, lockin' the door careful astern of me. The man Peters was just comin' into the store. I met him at the front door. We shook hands, and he introduced himself. 'Twas the investigator, sure enough.

"Glad to see you," says I. "I know that sound like a lie, but, as it happens, it ain't in this case. I ain't got anything to be ashamed of, and the

sooner the government finds that out, the better I'll be pleased."

He laughed. He was a real good chap, this Peters man, and I took to him right off the reel. We stood there talkin' and laughin', and says he:

"Well, cap'n," he says, "I'll tell you frankly that I'm not very much worried about the conduct of your office at Osterville. I've made some inquiries about you, here and in Washin'ton, and the answers are pretty satisfactory. Congressman Shelton seems to be a friend of yours."

I grinned.

"Yes," says I, "but Shelton's prejudiced, I'm afraid. He ate a chowder once that I cooked, and ever since he's swore by me."

"Humph!" says he. "That's unusual, isn't it? Judgin' by some chowders I've eaten, it would be easier to swear at the cook. Speakin' of eatables, though, reminds me that I'm hungry. Where's a good place to get a meal around here?"

"Nowhere," says I, prompt. "Not at this season of the year, with the summer dinin' room closed. But, if you'll wait until my assistant gets back, I'll pilot you down to the Poquit House, where I feed, and we'll face the wust together."

He was willin' to risk it, he said, and we walked back, and set down in the post-office department. As we left the front door, Sim Kelley went out of it, luggin' his West End mail box. Peters and I talked. Seems he hadn't come to the Cape a-purpose to investigate me, but he had a job at the Bayport office, and had took me in on the way home. After a spell, Mary Blaisdell come back, and Peters and I headed for the Poquit, where the cold fishballs and warmed-over beans was waitin'.

On the way, I saw old man Hamilton, Ike's uncle, toddlin' along, headin' to the west'ard this time. I pointed him out to Peters.

"There goes," I says, "one of the fellers that's tryin' to knock me out of my job."

"Humph!" says he. "He looks pretty near knocked out himself. Why, he's all bent out of shape."

"Yes," I told him. "Ichabod's bent,

but he's far from broke. And a tough old limb like him stands a lot of bendin'."

I was feelin' pretty good. With a square man like this Peters to look into matters, I cal'lated I'd be postmaster for a spell yet.

But that afternoon, about three o'clock, as we was inside the mail room, Mary at her desk, and Peters alongside of her, goin' over the books and papers, and me smokin' in a chair nigh the delivery window, Ike Hamilton walked into the store.

"Afternoon, Snow," says he, pert and important as ever. "I understand there's a registered letter for me. I s'pose it is part of your business to refuse to give it to the regular carrier and put me to the trouble of walkin' 'way down here."

"I s'pose 'tis," says I.

I reached down to the sortin' table where I'd laid the letter at noontime—and it wa'n't there.

I hunted that table over.

"Mary," says I, "did you put that registered letter of Mr. Hamilton's away somewhere?"

She looked surprised, and, it seemed to me, rather anxious.

"Why, no!" says she. "I haven't touched it."

Whew! Well, there was a lively hunt in that mail room for the next ten minutes, but it ended in nothin'. Ike Hamilton's registered letter was gone!

There's no use dwelling on unpleas-antness. And there's no use tellin' what Ike Hamilton said. I'd be liable to the law if I did tell it; and, besides, I've been away from seafarin' so long that my memory for such language ain't as good as 'twas. Ike wa'n't only mad—he was ha'f crazy, and pale and scared-lookin' besides. The interview ended by my takin' him by the arm and leadin' him to the door.

"You get out of here," I told him, "and I'll leave this door open so's to sweeten the air after you. That letter of yours has turned up missin', and I'm mighty sorry. I'll find it, though, or die a-tryin'. Meanwhile, unless you can behave like a decent human bein'—

which I doubt—you'll find it turrible unhealthy for you on these premises. Understand?"

I cal'late he understood, for he waited till he was out of reach afore he answered. Then he turned and snarled at me like a kicked dog.

Well, all the rest of that day and for the next two days, Mary, and Peters, and I hunted high and low for that letter; but we couldn't find it. I was worried, Peters was worried, and Mary Blaisdell seemed the most worried of any of us. Ike Hamilton come in every few hours, and, though he blustered and threatened a whole lot, he kept a civil tongue in his head, rememberin', I cal'late, what I said to him when I showed him the door. Apparently he hadn't told any of his cronies about his loss, for nobody else said a word about it to me. This was queer, for I expected the news would be all over town by this time.

Peters asked a lot of questions, and I done my best to satisfy him. I showed him the exact place where I laid the letter down afore I went to the front of the store to meet him; and he remembered, same as I did, that the door to the mail room was locked when we come back to it. And we'd stayed in that room together until Mary came and we went to dinner. Nobody but Mary and I had keys to the room, either.

'Course, I thought of Sim Kelley, and how mad he was because I took the letter away from him; and Peters and I cross-questioned him pretty sharp. But he told a straight yarn, and stuck to it. He hadn't seen the letter since I took it. He'd delivered the notice to Ike, and Ike had said he'd call and get the letter that afternoon. Well, all that seemed to be true; and, besides, there was no way Sim could have got hold of the thing if he'd wanted to.

"No use," says I, "when the question-in' was over and Sim had cleared out, protestin' injured innocence and almost cryin'. "No use," says I. "I cal'late he's tellin' the truth for once in his life. I guess his skirts are clear."

"Maybe so," says Peters. "His story is straight enough; but he don't look you in the face, and I don't like that."

"That's nothin'," I said. "He'd have to get round the corner to look a body in the face, as cross-eyed as he is."

Mary Blaisdell spoke up then.

"If this letter shouldn't be found at all, Mr. Peters," says she, "what effect would it have on Cap'n Zeb's position as postmaster?"

Peters was pretty solemn, and he shook his head.

"Well," he says, "to be perfectly frank with you, cap'n, it might have consider'ble effect. From what I've seen of you and this office, generally speakin', my report to headquarters would be a very favorable one. Your records and accounts are straight, and the place is neat and well kept. But your opponent's petition charges that several letters have been lost already. This loss comes at a very bad time, and it *might* be considered serious."

I'd realized all this, but it didn't help me much to hear him say it. I didn't make any answer, but Mary asked another question.

"But if," she says, slow, "it should turn out that the cap'n was not to blame at all? If some one else had lost that letter? He wouldn't be removed, then?"

"No, certainly not. That is, not if my report counted for anything."

"I see," says she; and she didn't speak to us again that afternoon.

Peters, though, had more questions to ask. What sort of a letter was this, anyhow? And did I have any idea what was in it?

I told him that I didn't really know much, but, bein' a Yankee, I was subject to the guessin' habit. Ike Hamilton had been buyin' stocks up to Boston, and this letter had a broker firm's name printed on the envelope. My guess was that there was some certificates, or such, inside.

"I see," he says. "That would explain what he said about its value. So he's been speculatin', hey?"

"So Sim Kelley hinted. But where the money comes from I don't see. Old Ichabod don't furnish it, I'll bet a hat. The old critter's got cramps in the

pocketbook worse than he has in his back."

"That was the old feller you pointed out to me the other day," he says. "I haven't seen him since. Where is he?"

"Back in bed with the rheumatiz, so I hear. Guess his cruise downtown was too much for him."

Well, the rest of our talk didn't amount to much, and I went home that night pretty blue and discouraged. I didn't care so much about bein' postmaster, but it hurt my pride to be bounced for bad seamanship. I'd never wrecked a craft afore in my life.

Next mornin' I come to the store at my usual time, but Mary was late, for a wonder. When she did come, she looked so pale and used up that I was troubled.

"Mary," says I, "what's the matter? Ain't sick, are you?"

"Oh, no!" says she. "I—I didn't sleep well, that's all. I'm all right."

"But Mary," I says, "I—"

"Please excuse me, Cap'n Zeb," she cut in. "I'm very busy."

She'd never used that tone to me afore, and I was set back about forty mile. Why she should be so frosty I couldn't see. I went out to the platform and paced the quarter-deck, thinkin'. I was down at the heel, anyway, and I thought a whole lot of fool things. I was goin' to lose my job, and so I s'posed that, after all, I'd ought to expect my friends to shake me. There's a proverb about rats leavin' a leaky vessel. But Mary Blaisdell! I cal'late I come as nigh wishin' I was dead as ever I did in my life.

'Twas almost eleven afore the Peters man showed up. He was walkin' brisk, and smilin' a little.

"Well," says I, "you're lookin' a heap more chipper than I feel. What are you grinnin' about?"

"Oh, just for instance," he says. "Is Miss Blaisdell in the office?"

"Guess so. She was a while ago. Yes, she's there. Why?"

"I want to see her—and you, too. Come on."

He led the way to the mail room. Mary was there, workin' at her books.

She looked up when we come in, and her face was whiter than ever. I forgot all about my "rat" thoughts, and the rest of it.

"Mary," says I, anxious, "you are under the weather. Why don't you go home?"

She held up her hand, and stopped me.

"Please don't," she says. "Mr. Peters, I want to speak to you. And to you, too, Cap'n Zeb. I—I've got somethin' that I must tell you."

'Twan't so much what she said as the way she said it. I looked at Peters, and he looked at me. I cal'late we was both wonderin' what sort of lightnin' was goin' to strike now.

She didn't leave us to wonder long. She went right on, speakin' quick, as if she wanted to get it over with.

"Mr. Peters," she says, "last night you told me that if it should be proved that Cap'n Zeb had no part in losin' that letter, if it wa'n't his fault at all, the postmastership wouldn't be taken from him. You meant that, didn't you?"

Peters looked queer enough.

"Why, yes," he says, "I did. But how—"

"Mr. Peters," she went on, in the same hurried way, "I lost that letter."

I don't know what Peters did then, but I know that my knees give from under me, and I flopped down in the armchair.

"You? You, Mary!" says I.

Peters seemed to be as much flabbergasted as I was. He rubbed his forehead.

"You lost it?" he says, slow.

"Yes," says she. "That is, I—I destroyed it by accident. It was while you two were at dinner. I was clearin' up the sortin' table, and—and puttin' the waste paper in the stove. I—I must have taken the letter with the other things."

"Nonsense!" I sung out.

Peters didn't say nothin'.

"Nonsense!" I said again. "You don't know that 'twas—"

"But I do," she interrupted. "I—I saw it burnin', and—and it was too late

to get it out. It was my fault altogether. No one else is to blame at all."

If I hadn't been settin' down already, you could have knocked me over with a feather. 'Twas an accident, of course; anybody might have done such a thing; but what I couldn't understand was why she hadn't told me of it afore. That didn't seem like her at all.

"Well!" I says. "Well!"

Peters had transferred his rubbin' from his forehead to his chin.

"Miss Blaisdell," says he, quiet, "why didn't you tell us sooner?"

"That's all right," I cut in, quick. "I don't blame her for not tellin'. I cal'late that she felt so bad about it that she couldn't make up her mind to tell right off. That was it, wa'n't it, Mary?"

She didn't look up, but sat playin' with a penholder.

"Yes," she says, "that was it."

"All right, then," says I. "It was an accident, and if anybody's to blame, it's me. I shouldn't have left the letter there."

*Then* she looked up.

"Of course you're not to blame," she says, awful earnest. "It was my fault entirely. You know it was, Mr. Peters. It was my fault, and I must take the consequences. I will resign my place as assistant—"

"Resign!" I sung out. "Resign! Well, I guess not!"

"But I shall. Of course I shall. Mr. Peters, you see that it wasn't Cap'n Snow's fault, don't you? *Don't* you?"

"Yes," says Peters, short.

"Nonsense!" I roared. "He don't see no such thing. Mary, I don't care—"

She held up her hand.

"Please don't talk to me now," she begged. "Please—not now."

I looked at Peters. There was a look in his eyes, almost as if he was smilin' inside. I could have punched his head for it.

"But, Mary—" I began.

"Please don't talk to me," she begged, almost cryin'. "Please go away and leave me now. Please."

I cal'late I shouldn't have gone. Fact is, I know I shouldn't; but that govern-

ment investigator put his hand on my arm.

"Cap'n," he says, "come with me."

"With you?" I snapped. "Why?"

"Because I want you to. It's important. I won't keep you long."

I went, but he'll never know how much I wanted to kick him. As I shut the door of the mail room, I saw poor Mary's head go down on her arms on the desk.

Peters led me out to the front of the store, where he come to anchor on a shoe case.

"Set down," says he, pattin' the case alongside of him.

"I don't feel like settin'," I says ugly. "And I tell you, Mr. Peters—"

"No," says he, "I'm goin' to tell you this time. Or, if I'm not, the feller I told to be here at half past eleven will. Yes. Here he comes now."

In at the door comes Sim Kelley, and if ever a chap looked as if he was marchin' to be hung, he did. His eyes was red, and his face was white under the freckles.

"Here—here I be, Mr. Peters," he stammered.

"Yes, I see you 'be,'" says Peters, dry as a chip. "All right. Now you can tell Cap'n Snow what you told me this mornin'."

Sim looked at me, and at the government man. He was shakin' all over.

"Aw, Cap'n Zeb," he bust out, "don't be too hard on me. Don't put me in jail. I know I hadn't ought to have taken that letter, but you riled me up when you told me I couldn't be trusted with it. Ike pays me to fetch the mail. And he told me he was expectin' an important letter from them stock brokers. So I—"

Well, there's no use tryin' to spin the yarn the way he did. 'Twas all mixed up with prayers about not puttin' him in jail, and what would his ma say, and "Pleases," and "Oh, don'ts," and such. Biled down and skimmed, it amounted to this: He'd seen me lay that Hamilton letter on the sortin' table; saw it when he come back to tell me that Peters had arrived. After I'd gone out to the platform, he was struck with an

idea. He *would* take that letter to Ike just to show that he could be trusted, and, besides, Ike had promised him fifty cents for lookin' out for it and fetchin' it to him direct. He had a key to the Hamilton box, and the letter laid right back of that box. All he had to do was reach through the box to the table, take the letter and lock up again. So he did it, and put the letter in his overcoat inside pocket.

"And—and—" he finished up, almost blubberin'. "There was a great big hole in that pocket, and I didn't know it."

"I did," says I involuntary, so to speak. "Never mind. Heave ahead."

"And the letter must have dropped out of it. When I got a little ways up the road, I found 'twas gone. I didn't dast tell Ike or you. I—I didn't dast to. Ike would kill me if I told him, and—and— Oh, please, Cap'n Zeb, don't put me in jail! I don't know where the letter is. Honest, I don't! *Please!*" And so on.

Peters cut him short.

"There!" says he. "That'll do, Kelley, you go out on the platform and wait till we need you. Go ahead! Shut up—and go."

Sim went, but I cal'late if we'd listened we could have heard the platform boards tremblin' underneath where he was standin'.

Peters looked at me, and grinned. 'Twas my time to rub my forehead.

"Well!" says I. "Well, I—I— Is he lyin'?"

"Didn't act like it, did he?"

"No-o, he didn't. But—but, if he took that letter, how did it get back onto that sortin' table?"

"How do you know it did?"

"How do I know? Course it got back there! Didn't Mary say—"

"Wait a minute," he put in. "How do you explain that, cap'n?"

He was holdin' out somethin' that he'd took from his pocket. I grabbed it. 'Twas the regular receipt for that registered letter, and 'twas signed by Ichabod Hamilton, Junior.

I looked at that receipt, and then at him. The paddin' in my head that I

compliment by callin' brains was whirlin' as if somebody was stirrin' it. I couldn't say a word. He laughed out loud.

"Don't have a fit, Cap'n Snow," he says. "It's simple enough. What you told me yesterday about the firm of Hamilton & Co. put me wise to the real answer to the riddle. I remembered that you pointed out old Hamilton to me on the street when you and I were on the way to that hotel, where we dined, the noon of my arrival. He was on his way home then, and he had been somewhere in this vicinity. There was a chance that he had been here at the office. This mornin' I went to his house, and found him in bed. He was full of rheumatism and groans, but fuller still of the Evil One. I told him I knew he'd got his partner's registered letter—a bluff, of course—and he didn't take the trouble to deny it. Seems Sim Kelley, with the mail box, passed him right here by the store platform. As they passed each other, the letter fell from Kelley's overcoat pocket. The old man picked it up, intendin' to call to Kelley, and give it back to him. When he saw the address, he didn't."

He stopped, then, waitin' for me to say somethin', I s'pose. But I couldn't say anything. My head was fuller of stirabout than ever, and I just stared at him with my mouth open.

"When he saw the address—and the name of the brokerage firm—he didn't. He took that letter home, and opened it. You see, the old feller is nobody's fool, even if his rheumatism has kept him from active business for the last few months. He had suspected his nephew of speculatin', and here was the proof—a hundred shares of cheap minin' stock, and a letter sayin' that two hundred more had been bought on a margin. Young Hamilton had been stock-jobbin' with the firm's money."

"My—soul!" was all I could say.

"Yes. Well, old Ichabod is—ha! ha! —a queer character. His rheumatism had come back, and he was waitin' to get better afore he took the matter up with his partner. 'What I'll say and do to that young pup is a well man's job,'

he told me. We had a long talk, and it ended in his sendin' for Ike. As soon as the young chap came I cleared out—that is, after I got this receipt signed. That bedroom was too sulphurous for me. I could smell brimstone even in the front yard. Cap'n, I guess you needn't worry about your rival candidate for postmaster. He's got trouble enough of his own."

I got up, slow and deliberate, from that shoe case.

"But—but—" I stuttered.

"Yes? Anything that I haven't made clear?"

"Anything? Why, if all this yarn of yours is so—but it *can't* be so—why did Mary burn that letter?"

"She didn't."

"But she said she did."

"I know. Well, cap'n, if you'll remember when we talked, the three of us, yesterday, I hinted that unless you were cleared of blame in this affair you might be removed from office."

"I know, but—hey? You mean that she lied, and put the blame on herself, so as to save *me*? So's I'd keep my job?"

"Looks that way to a man up a tree, don't it?"

"But why—why should she sacrifice herself for—for me?"

Peters bit the end off of a cigar.

"That," says he, "don't come under the head of government business."

Mary was still at her desk when I walked into the mail room. I put my hand on her shoulder.

"Mary," says I, "I know all about it."

She looked at me. Her eyes were wet, and I cal'late mine wa'n't as dry as a sand bank in July.

"You know?" she says.

"Yes," says I. And I told her the yarn. Afore I got through the color had come back to her cheeks.

"Then you did leave it on the sortin' table, after all," she says, almost in a whisper.

"Course I did! Didn't I say so?"

"Yes, but—Cap'n Zeb, I saw you put that letter in your overcoat pocket. I saw you do it myself."

So there 'twas. I'd forgot to tell her about my mistake in the overcoats, and she thought I'd lost the letter and didn't know it.

"And so," says I, after I'd explained, "you thought I'd lost it, and yet you took the blame all on yourself. You risked your place, and told a lie just to save me, Mary. Why did you do it?"

"How could I help it?" she says. "You've been so good to me, and so kind."

"Good and kind be keelhauled!" I sung out. "Mary, my goodness and kindness wouldn't explain a thing like that. Oh, Mary, don't let's have another misunderstandin'. I'm crazy, maybe, to think of such a thing, and I'm ten years older than you, and you'll be throwin' yourself away; but *do* you care enough for me to—"

She got up from her desk, all flustered like.

"It's mail time," she says. "I—I must—"

But 'twan't mail I was interested in just then. I caught her afore she could get away.

"Could you, Mary?" I pleaded.

She wouldn't look at me, so I put my hand under her chin, and tipped her head back so I could see her face. 'Twas as red as a spring peony, and her eyes were wetter than ever. But they were shinin' behind the fog.

Well, about three that afternoon, we were alone together in the mail room. Peters, who had as much common sense as anybody ever I see, had gone for a walk.

Mary was thinkin' things over, and says she:

"But it was too bad," she says, "that all the worry and trouble had to come on you just because of that foolish Sim Kelley. I'm so sorry."

"Sorry!" says I. "I'm goin' to give Sim a ten-dollar bill next time I see him. If I gave him a million 'twould be a cheap price for what I've got by his buttin' in. Sorry! I ain't sorry, I tell you that!"

And I've never been sorry since, either.

# Rufus of the Birds

By  
Anna Alice  
Chapin

**T**HE sea waves stole in to the white beach, and the gray-green dunes swept away in billows of sand, and stubble, and stunted growth to the west. As far as the eye could see was the moor, with the white sand showing between the thick patches of dull olive and jade; and beyond was the sky. Always there seemed something magical and stirring about that western sky. Perhaps it was because there was nothing in front of it except the dunes. One could see all its changes, without trees or spires or hilltops to interfere. It blazed or dreamed or opened heavenly vistas, or sometimes reflected the sea in the east, and seemed to stretch in aerial shoals far and far. And the west wind blew from it, and came singing over the moor to meet the breath of the sea.

Thick as the gray-green stubble on the dunes, thick as the foam on the sea, thick as the shimmering clouds in the west were the sand martins. They whirled, and flickered, and crowded in the unquiet salt air; and the moving of them was like a pulse. There were too many of them, the sand martins. They flew too close, they moved too ceaselessly, they took away the breath and dizzied the sight of those who watched.

All except Rufus—Rufus of the Birds. Something still and crippled in his soul, as well as in his body, found expression that was relief in the tireless motion of the martins.

The house of Rufus of the Birds was itself like a bird's house. Little and

narrow, with a peaked and crooked roof and irregular windows, it perched high on a rock between the shore of white sand and the spacious dune lands. It had no color. Its weather-stained wood seemed to have grown from the dun and silver soil. Its meager windows reflected elusive greens, and blues, and violets from the ocean and the sky. At sunset, the high western panes blazed ruby red and angry. In winter midnights, the eastern windows became pearly lights from the rays of the rising moon.

The winds shook the little house, and forced themselves through it. It was full of voices, as it was full of shadows. You would have said it housed a thousand unseen entities, strange and unrestful, besides Rufus and his wife.

Rufus and his wife! Rufus and his wife Estella! The very house might have groaned, the winds might have sighed, the sea wept at the thought of these two linked together in such melancholy, such unblessed fashion.

For Rufus was a hunchback, with a soul as misshapen, it seemed, as his body. A violent yet secret man, full of wild, mysterious impulses and emotions; cruel, dreamy, cursed with that soaring inspiration and bitter temper that make for greatness—or for evil. And Estella was like one of the sand martins—swift and vital, graceful, lovely, immeasurably eager and joyous, and as immeasurably wistful. She was an exquisite, sensitive little creature, with soft brown hair like a thrush's plumage,

darting black eyes, and a bird's voice, liquid and full of sudden cadences that twisted your heart.

She had been a gypsy, and when but a young slip of a girl had wandered from her tribe, and somehow came to the unwelcoming door of Rufus of the Birds. Why, none could say, he had taken her in, sheltered and fed her without warmth or tenderness, and let her serve him for payment. When she grew older, he had married her. But never had there been talk of love between them. She had remained his servant; he had abated none of his bitter, contemptuous indifference toward her.

So they lived, these two, whose only bond was their tumultuous, inarticulate souls; and even that a bond unrecognized between them.

They called him Rufus of the Birds because he trapped and mounted the wild birds to send to the cities. He was a taxidermist, but one who plied his unbeautiful trade temperamentally by fits and starts. Sometimes the birds he had caught would be set free again. Sometimes he took an unaccountable fancy to them, and kept them in cages till they pined and died.

The house between the dunes and the water was just perceptibly tainted by the smell of chloroform; was faintly alive with the flutter of frustrated wings, and with the low plaints of delicate wild things, offering up their souls to the God of birds in a ceaseless prayer to be free.

It seemed to Estella, shuddering at their hushed noises of lament, that at times Rufus took a somber pleasure in the despair of the caged birds. Was it because in them he felt a strange likeness to his own cramped soul, fettered by a deformity deeper than that of the body?

Occasionally she would steal at night to a cage of mourning, and set the little captive free. Then her husband would rage at her like a madman, and in terror she would run from him, taking refuge among the sheltering dunes till, as experience had proved, his fury had spent itself.

They were so unhappy together that it had never occurred to them that they could have been happy. Their misery, their discord seemed like the doom of storm or temperature or tides. They accepted it with a fatalism in which neither hope nor revolt had part.

There was one exquisite bird, an oriole, that had ventured over the dunes and been captured in one of Rufus' nets. These were carefully conceived and spread far inland; and every day the hunchback tramped among them with a basket and great cage to gather up his victims, some condemned to death, and some to life. The oriole he had reprieved from the chloroform bottle, and it sat silent all day in its dark cage with a shadow on the glory and gold of its splendid plumage.

Rufus treasured it for some reason, and Estella wept for it. It was so beautiful, so little, and so alone.

An autumn dusk drew in across the sea; in, and yet in, till it stole over the dunes to the west, and blotted out the cold amber light that had glared there. It was long to pass, that fading and darkening of the sunset glow, before it had spent itself, before twilight was established. The clock a mile away in a neighboring fishing village had struck the hour of six.

As though answering the signal, the last light slipped from the sky at one and the same moment with those echoing notes, so strangely sweetened by distance. Then the shadows crowded in helter-skelter from sea and moorland, and huddled about the little, crooked house; and a new and wilder wind came singing a mysterious litany.

At the door of the house, Estella sang, too, a half-forgotten gypsy song of her untrammeled girlhood.

"Willows, rushes,  
Blackberry bushes,  
Balsam fetched from the forest shady;  
Braided grasses,  
And magic passes,  
What will you buy o' me, my pretty, pretty lady?"

"What will you buy,  
When the gypsies come a-nigh?  
Stories, and fortunes, and columbines gay?"

Oh, you cannot buy our health,  
For a dozen tons o' wealth,  
And you cannot know our freedom, no  
matter what you pay!  
Pretty lady! Pretty lady!

"Balsam and grasses,  
Spells and passes,  
Spoil o' the greenwood deep and shady;  
Runes and redes,  
And acorn beads,  
What will you buy o' me, my pretty, pretty  
lady?"

Her husband's voice broke harshly in upon her dreaming mood.

"You are always singing, like an empty-headed fool," he rated her sourly.

"Or like a bird," returned Estella, trying to smile. "The birds sing."

"They don't sing silly words. They let you put your own words to their songs."

Estella looked at him timidly.

"You don't like the words of my song?"

Rufus laughed roughly.

"I try not to listen to them," he exclaimed. "Gypsy nonsense! Gypsies are all fools and children."

Estella flushed.

"They are free, and brave, and merry," she retorted tremulously.

Rufus turned on her almost with a snarl. Suddenly she saw that it was envy which was rending him, and she grew swiftly gentle.

"Rufus," she said, "do you never grow tired of the dunes?"

"No," he answered.

"The cold, lonely dunes, where no one ever comes?" she went on.

"No," he said again.

"Nor of the sea—the cruel, great sea that is never still?"

"No."

"Nor of the sky?" She shivered. "The terrible sky that seems so close to us here—so close it almost crushes us! Do you never want to get away from the sky, Rufus?"

"No," he still repeated coldly.

She was silent for a moment, then made a slow, hopeless gesture.

"I think that—I shall die," she said simply.

"What do you want, then?" he demanded.

"Laughter and warmth," she said, "and human beings, and—and—" She paused.

"Go on. What else?" said Rufus fiercely.

"I do not know what, Rufus."

"I know!" he stormed. "You are light, like all women. You want the gayety of the senses that devours the soul; you want excitement, and the joys of the body. You want, perhaps, what fools call love."

"Rufus!" she cried. "You shall not say such things!"

"Why not?"

"I am—your wife! I—"

"What has that to do with it?" he said cruelly. "I do not want your love. You are not robbing me, even if you send it forth seeking another!"

Estella drooped her head. She could not speak. He glowered at her.

"So you hate the dunes, and the sea, and the sky?"

She raised her eyes with a sob.

"It is so—lonely."

"The soul can only grow alone," he said, in a hard voice.

"Rufus," said the girl earnestly, "is your soul growing?"

There was a short silence, in which they looked at each other. At last he said harshly:

"You think it is not?"

She said nothing.

It was growing darker. Another chime echoed from the distant clock. The sea was rising in the dimness. The oriole gave forth a low note of sorrow.

"My soul!" said the hunchback, in a voice of bitterness. "What do you know of my soul? What do you know of the great thoughts, the mighty dreams that go through me, the flashes of inspiration, the depths of understanding? How can you guess the light, and glory, and tempest, and wonder that surge in this abominable body of mine? How—"

Estella interrupted him in terror. "Rufus!"

He passed his hand across his face. He was bathed in sweat, and his breath came in hard gasps. Suddenly he was still.

"No, you are right," he said quietly. "That is in my brain, not my soul. My soul is hurt like my back. It will not grow!" He was speaking like a man in a dream. "Leave me. I do not want you here. You want life, and I—I am done with it. Go to the world, and leave me here with my soul and my body, such as they are."

"You do not mean—" whispered Estella, shrinking.

"Leave me!" he said, with a somber look.

"Now?"

"Yes. I will not have you stay!"

Still she lingered.

"Rufus, do you hate me so?" she asked him, almost wistfully.

"I do not know," he said. "But I will not have you stay."

"I will go. But you will be alone?"

"I have my birds." He would not look at her.

"Yes." She hesitated, then said impulsively: "Rufus, the oriole! Let the oriole go—as you have let me!"

"Good-by," he said roughly.

"Good-by." Her voice broke.

She took a cloak from a nail and ran out into the twilight. Rufus watched her flit toward the dunes; then he turned to the sea, and crouched on the sill of the door, a huddled, monstrous figure, with eyes that burned through the dusk. The oriole's plaint sounded again, more faintly.

The hours passed, and at last the brooding storm broke loose. The air was filled with the clamor of the sea and of the giant winds. Foam, salt, and cold sprayed through the air far up the shore. The last light had been wiped from earth and sky by a great sponge of darkness.

As though frozen or turned to stone, Rufus of the Birds crouched on his doorstep, staring out to sea, though he could no longer see the lashing waves, though the rain beat upon him and the wild wind whistled about his head.

It was long before he stirred; but when he did it was with a strange violence that seemed to share something of the fury of the gale around him. He rose unsteadily, and clung to the jamb

of the door with strong yet shaking hands, and suddenly he lifted his harsh voice, and cried strangely to the tempest and the night. Was it invective, protest, or lament? Was it apostrophe or appeal? Was it a prayer or an elegiac? Only the god of storms and battles can know.

The wind and the drumming rain drowned the hoarse shriek of the hunchback's voice. He spent himself in his crying; and staggered, broken, into the house where his birds fluttered wildly, terrified by the uproar of the elements.

Then the hunchback did a strange thing. He lighted a lamp, and carried it to a window—a western window facing the storm-swept dunes. There he set it upon a table, looping back the meager curtain that the rays might stream out freely across the night.

After that he went about his evening duties, making his pets, or, rather, his prisoners, as comfortable as might be; bringing the seed, and bread crumbs, and fresh water; shielding the cages from the light and from drafts.

He himself ate nothing. He looked old and haggard. His face, a powerful, even a handsomely molded one, was white. A heaviness clung to his strong though misshapen body.

When he had finished with the birds, he sat down in a chair facing the clock, and waited.

He did not sleep; but from time to time a strange swoon gripped him. His head was light and dizzy, and his thoughts wandered. Occasionally he forced himself back to full consciousness to note the time. Always it was later than he expected. How short the hours, to him who usually found time so slow and weary in its passing! How swiftly the night was slipping from him—this night of all nights! The birds were silent; even the complaint of the oriole was hushed.

It was near morning when Rufus of the Birds rose stiffly and, with a great, hopeless gesture, accepted his tragedy. To the relentless clock, the lonely walls, the still birds he spoke.

"She will not come back," he said, and then was silent.

Silent yet, he went about what he had to do. He went to a corner cupboard and took out a large bottle with a red label, and a cloth. He noticed that the night was very still. The storm had ceased. On one side of the room was a rude couch, and he went there and stretched himself upon it with that sinister bottle and the cloth.

As he raised the latter to his lips, he remembered something, and rose once more. He took all his cages to the door, one after the other, and let the birds free—the oriole first. The little things were dazed by their liberty; but after a moment they flew heavily away into the darkness.

Rufus shut the door, and stood a moment looking at the empty cages. Then he returned to the couch.

Oh, sweet, oh, blessed breath, bringing oblivion! He, whose wild and sometimes noble fancies had leaped among such strange and diverse things, had never thanked God simply in all his days. Now, for the first time, his tired soul sent up a prayer of gratitude as the fumes of the chloroform enveloped him, inundated him, caressing his sick spirit and aching nerves, promising him that exquisite peace of his desire.

Bitterness, revolt, cruelty, pain—how they were solved and resolved by this impersonal harmony! No longer was he lonely. No longer was he ashamed. No longer was he dumb and struggling. Like cool water upon fever, like darkness on aching eyes, like the ceasing of torture, like sleep, like rain, like the kiss of the beloved, Death held out gentle arms to him.

His hand dropped nerveless and numb beside him; but the beneficent cloth lay yet upon his lips, and he breathed it as a man breathes his hope of heaven.

"Rufus!"

First a sense of pain, of disappointment, the return of aching consciousness of self and a miserable world—then bewilderment.

"Rufus!"

Somewhere a clock ticked, air blew across his face, eyes, dark and ardent, gazed into his, and he felt something warm fall upon his cold cheek. Instinctively he caught his breath, and the fresh air rushed into his lungs. Involuntarily, irrationally he felt relief, though his head swam.

The eyes came closer.

"Rufus! I am not too late? Speak to me! Say I am not too late!"

He tried to say her name, but his lips and tongue were numb. Suddenly he felt her mouth on his, timid yet passionate. Again her tears fell upon him. Her voice in his ears was like that of a thrush—or was it an oriole?

"Rufus—my husband—I could not go. I could not be happy away from you. I did not know—but—I love you! Oh, I love you with my whole heart and soul! You will not send me away again?"

Slowly, tremulously he raised himself, and gazed, wondering, into her eyes. Like a man who fears yet rejoices, he touched her cheek. It was wet, and now warmed marvelously under his finger. She moved impetuously closer.

"Rufus—you wanted me?"

He looked at the overturned bottle, the limp, still-reeking cloth. Wanted her? He, the dumb, the inarticulate, had no words. All that he could say—and that hoarsely, brokenly—was:

"Estella—forgive me."

"For what?" she whispered near his lips.

"Everything—since the beginning—I—" He hesitated, then slowly, reverently, gladly he put his arms around her. "I love you," said Rufus of the Birds for the first time in his life.

"Oh, look!" cried Estella softly.

Dawn was breaking over the sea. In the rosy eastern light a flash of moving gold glinted at the doorway. It was the oriole, which, frightened and buffeted by the high winds, had returned to the only nesting place it knew.



# ROMEO'S WIFE



## W.Carey Wonderly



WHEN Johnny King entered the stage door of the Oriole Theater at ten o'clock Monday morning, a sister team, down near the footlights, was rehearsing a new "bear-cat" number, and Douglas Adair had not arrived. King, who had come rushing in, was much disappointed at his friend's absence, and he stood in the wings watching the two girls at the piano, and quite unconscious of what he was doing.

The De Lyte Sisters had seen King, however; and Miss Rita's voice grew suddenly hoarse, while Miss Gladys stopped her vocal efforts entirely. The orchestra leader looked up, frowned, and reminded the team that he hadn't all day to give to them—there were others waiting to rehearse.

Thereupon, Gladys played with her gold vanity set, and said nothing; but Rita, stooping down, addressed him in a confidential whisper.

"Listen. It's that Johnny King with that frozen map o' his that put me and Glad off the track. Honest, professor, that John will be the death o' two defenseless, struggling girls yet—that from yours truly. For three weeks running we've played the same bills, and I've yet to see a smile light up the august countenance. Am I right, Glad?"

Gladys wiped her eyes on a tiny bit of lace and cambric; then, remembering, inspected, first her handkerchief, and next her face in the vanity mirror for traces of disturbed beauty.

"It's the Gawd's truth!" she declared

tragically. "He's billed as a comedian, I know; and on the stage he's a scream—we aren't denying that! He's good! But once away from the merry spot, and he's the whole arctic zone, and then some. You'll excuse us, perfessor; but when that joy killer flashes his lamps over our way we get so upset."

"And since she had ptomaine poisoning, Glad's so temper'mental!" added Rita.

"Truth! It cost us two weeks' booking; and one of 'em was Boston!" cried Gladys. "Gawd knows what them dear Harvard boys done without us, for they'd been waiting all season to welcome us to Bean Center. Life is just one durn thing after 'nother."

"It was terrible," sighed Rita.

Gladys gathered up her skirts, and was about to join her sister, who was still in a stooping posture, her face on a level with the leader's, when he suddenly winked his eye, and played a loud chord on the piano. Gladys turned. Rita stood up. Johnny King was beside them.

"Could you tell me if Mr. Adair has been here this morning?" he asked the leader, and without noticing the De Lyte Sisters.

With a cry of welcome, Rita's hand shot out, and, before King quite realized what had occurred, he was shaking hands at an angle of forty-five degrees.

"It's Mr. King, Glad!" exclaimed Rita. "Why, what a pleasant surprise! You didn't tell us you was playing here this week! Ain't it puffictly lovely, Glad?"

"It's all that, and then some," nodded Gladys, grasping his hand vigorously. "Honest, this life is so hard on a poor lone girl who longs for home, and maw, and all the folks, that to see a friend like you, Mr. King, is just as good as taking six bows at Hammerstein's at a Monday matinée."

"You're very kind," said Johnny King, looking thoroughly uncomfortable.

"Want to see Mr. Adair?" asked Rita, slipping her arm through his and looking demurely up and down the bare stage.

"Yes." He drew a deep breath. He was a short, lean man of uncertain years, with a smooth, white skin and very blue eyes. The girls had closed in about him like a conquering army, but he offered no defense, gazing at the orchestra leader with set, unsmiling countenance. "If Mr. Adair's not here, I'll go outside and wait, I think," he added hastily.

"Well, he ain't come yet," dimpled Gladys. "He's a grand actor—indeed, yes! I saw him do *Romeo*; and, believe me, none of 'em's got anything on him when it comes to tights!"

"Oh, Glad!" murmured Rita; and she put up her hand to hide her face. "Ain't she awful, Mr. King? Tights!"

The leader touched the piano keys significantly.

"Oh, cert'ly, perfessor!" cried Gladys. "Come, dear! Now, while Rita does her imitation of Anner Held, I'm off changin' to boy. Then comes our bear-cat dance; and Rita does Nazimova while I change back to white sating. Then the Frisco rag—get me?"

Believing himself to be unobserved, Johnny King retraced his steps, not stopping until the stage door had closed behind him. But the De Lyte Sisters had seen him go, and, after allowing him time to get beyond earshot, Rita turned excitedly to the leader.

"For a joy dispenser, that man takes the chowder!" she declared. "He wouldn't smile if Lillian Russell gave him the high sign. I hate a grouch!"

"Dolling, he's been crossed in love,"

said Gladys. "I heard all about it from a man who knew him years ago when he was playing ten shows a day in a picture house out in Chi—and darned glad to get 'em, too! Now he's head-lining bills; and even done his stunt at Windsor. I ask you, perfessor, what chanct has two lone girls got in this dog-gone man's game? Here we are opening shows and following pictures which some poor jays applaud, mind you. Why, Gertrude Hoffman couldn't make good in them spots!"

"Put us on between nine and eleven at Hammerstein's, and we'll clean up the show," nodded Rita. "They was nuts on us at Altoona—that sure was some awful bill! Wasn't it, Glad?"

The leader jerked his thumb in the direction of the stage door, and, turning, the De Lyte Sisters saw a party of three enter the theater. Talking with Johnny King was Douglas Adair, a big, handsome man with iron-gray hair. His physique seemed to emphasize King's insignificance. Between the two men walked a woman, swathed in white furs.

"That's what I call luck!" grumbled Rita, her eyes taking in every detail of the woman's costume. "When Adair was on Broadway, she was playing *Lady Capulet* and the *Player Queen*. Now she's *Juliet*—humph!"

"Wife?" asked the leader.

"No-o!" cried Gladys scornfully. "Say, didn't you hear about that? *Mercutio*—"

The stage manager, having assigned Adair and his party to their dressing rooms, came tearing down to the footlights.

"Here, Mr. Max!" to the leader. "Ladies, if you haven't finished rehearsing, you'll have to wait until later on. Mademoiselle Olivetti's music, Max. No use, ladies, you've been at it long enough, and Olivetti has got to rehearse her monkeys, and then feed 'em, before the matinée. Later on, yes. Ready, Max? Mademoiselle Olivetti. All right."

At the door of Douglas Adair's dressing room, the woman in the white furs

stopped for a moment to exchange a few words with the star and Johnny King. At least, she talked with Adair. King said nothing. He had said nothing to her since Adair had introduced them at the stage entrance.

"Well," she smiled, at length moving away, and with a last look at Johnny King.

His blue eyes, expressionless and unsmiling, met hers, and she turned angrily to Adair.

"We're not to rehearse in costume, I believe?" she said. "All right. In ten minutes, then."

Adair threw open the door and motioned with his hand for King to enter. Inside the room, the two men stood for a brief moment, hands clasped and looking steadily into each other's face.

"Doug," said King then, "you're gray—at forty!"

"Jack," answered Adair simply, "I've been ready to give in more than once."

"Oh!" King made a quick, impatient gesture. "That's not like you, old man. Of course, it was—terrible. You—know—I feel—there!"

"You know?" asked Adair.

"I read about it in the London papers. I was in England at the time," said King.

Adair walked the length of the room, and laughed.

"One of the papers made quite a fine story out of it," he told his friend. "Something like this: '*Romeo's wife* elopes with *Mercutio*. *Juliet* refuses to follow the lines set down by the Immortal Bard, and deserts her love-sick lord for his more lively kinsman.' Something like that; maybe not quite. It certainly created a stir. We were at the Times Square, on Broadway, then, and I had left her at our hotel to get to the theater early to see about the lights. She didn't come, but her note did at eight o'clock. Simply said she was going away with Eversley. It broke me all up—yes, it did! I closed the Broadway engagement then and there, and now I'm here in vaudeville, the refuge of the sensational, the freak, and the has-been. Doing the balcony scene from '*Romeo and*

*Juliet*,' and a bit from '*Hamlet*.' Oh, tell me about yourself!"

"There's nothing to tell," said King slowly.

"Nothing to tell after four years?" scoffed Adair, seating himself on a trunk.

"No. I've been on the other side all that time, you know. Just got back last month."

"So you had to go to London to let them know in America what you could do?" said Adair thoughtfully. "Sheep! They're afraid to think for themselves over here."

"I never played in a first-class house in America until I had showed in London. Then I came back a headliner at a salary of four figures," said King slowly. "And," he added, "I'm doing the same stuff now I did six years ago in the ten-cent houses."

Adair had been looking at him with a cynical light in his eyes. Suddenly he asked:

"You're not married?"

"No," replied King.

"Why?"

"Because when I fell in love with a certain girl, I was making thirty dollars a week," King said quietly. "That was six years ago. Since then I've never seen a woman I cared enough for to ask to marry me."

"The faithful-until-death stunt, eh?" laughed Adair. "Jack, they're not worth it. You've got the coin now. Pick the youngest and loveliest. No use thinking about the old original. Six years ago—why, her spring has turned to summer by this time, man!"

"I'm forty," King reminded him.

"But you're a man, and a man with a bank roll. What became of this wonderful first and only?"

"What does it matter? I was too poor then, and now—it's six years later." He looked at Adair out of his mild blue eyes, and the corners of his mouth began to twitch nervously. "Doug," said he, "you're not talking like yourself, and this new Adair is not the one I palled with in the old days when he was playing Shakespeare up over livery stables and in deserted barns for the

pure love of the thing, long before Broadway took him for its own. What's the matter? What's wrong? For years I've been treasuring this moment, almost living for it, and now you're not Douglas Adair at all."

Adair crossed to the door. When he returned, he said:

"It's Janet."

"You still love her?"

"I shall always love her," answered Adair. "When she went away with Eversley, I told myself I didn't care, and I tried to cheat people, and myself, into the belief that I didn't care. After I closed at the Times Square, I got into the night life of Broadway—lobster palaces, good fellows, supper parties; but all the time it was Janet—just Janet! I wrote to her—she was in California, and she sent me a note in which she said she was perfectly happy. When I felt the need of money again, I came here—vaudeville. Kathie Gordon—she was with us on Broadway. Not much of an actress, not brilliant, like the other; but she's not a stranger; she knows; and this is the first chance she has ever had at anything."

"That's white of you, anyway," put in King.

"No; pure selfishness. I don't want strangers who will pry into things, and try to find out all about it. I tell you, man, Kathie Gordon was with the company when it happened. It's an old story with her. So, you see, pure selfishness."

King shook his head.

"An old pal won't see it that way," said he.

There was a knock on the door, and King rose from the trunk while Adair went to answer the summons. It was the property man turned call boy; and he said that the orchestra was ready to rehearse the headliner, please.

As Johnny King crossed the stage, he saw the De Lyte Sisters waiting in the wings for a chance to get a second rehearsal on their songs. One of the girls was playing with a white poodle, and both of them greeted him with elaborate salutations; for, while he might possess

a wintry countenance which struck Miss Gladys dumb each time she met it, he was likewise the star attraction and a personage.

For some reason or other, King was thinking of these two girls all the time he was supposed to be rehearsing; and he gave the orchestra leader a pretty bad half hour. King was at heart a serious man. The long, lean years had made him so. The De Lyte Sisters, with their loud, shabby finery, their fluffy dogs and plated jewelry, struck him with a sort of pity which was singularly free from anything like contempt.

As he turned away from the leader with a muttered thanks, he went over to the girls, and stopped to speak to them.

"Are you waiting to rehearse?" he asked, a trifle awkwardly.

Miss Rita shot him a dazzling smile. After all, men were men.

"Yes," returned she, "we are. They gave us a few minutes this morning, but it wasn't enough, and we're waiting to tackle that Jool Song from 'Faust,' which we both think would make a real classy finish to the act. You know, Mr. King, a audience nowadays demands class. Glad's illness—I guess you heard about Gladys being took with ptomaine poisoning? Yes, indeedy!"

"I'll just speak to the stage manager, and ask him to give you a rehearsal next," said King, moving away. "There's no use keeping you girls waiting here all day."

"Thank Heaving! At last we have found a gent who knows how to treat a lady when he sees her," cried Rita passionately. "No one around here has paid any more attention to us 'n if we were a couple o' Olivetti's monks. Not even a chair handed us—and Glad just out o' a sick bed! This ain't no profession for a gentle brung-up girl, Mr. King. Our maw didn't want us ever to be actresses; and because she made us promise to be in bed early every night is the onliest reason we're opening shows. Ain't he the considerate one, Glad?"

"All that, and then some," smiled Gladys; and she winked at the property

man, who returned her salutation with interest.

When they were down at the foot-lights again, Rita resuming her conversation with the leader at the very place she had left off a half hour ago, King strolled back to Douglas Adair's dressing room. In the corridor, he stepped aside to allow Kathie Gordon to pass, but neither of them spoke.

In front of his mirror sat Adair, costumed as *Romeo*, and busy with a complexion which only comes in boxes. King looked his surprise.

"Going to have a dress rehearsal?" he asked.

Adair rubbed more rouge on his cheek.

"Not going to rehearse at all," he answered. "Both Miss Gordon and I know this thing backward, and all the music cues are written down for 'em."

King looked at him closely.

"Doug," he cried, "what on earth are you doing with all that rouge? Not playing an ingénue now, are you?"

"Why?"

"Because," went on King, "your make-up's all wrong. Your eyes now look damn' funny, and all that red—"

Adair turned deliberately around and faced his friend; and, in spite of the paint, King could see the gray lips, the ashen cheeks, the unnaturally bright eyes which glowed like live coals.

"Good God, man, what's wrong?" cried King then.

"I just received a letter. It came while you were out on the stage there. Would you like to read it?" Adair asked.

"Why—what is it?"

"Merely a letter from a woman. Here!" He tossed a folded bit of note paper to him. "Read what she has to say for herself."

King took the letter, and, without opening it, said:

"Is it from—her?"

Adair laughed harshly.

"Good boy! You go up ahead. It is from—her. I got the brief pause before the name, thanks, old fellow. Yes, it is from Janet Adair that was and Miss May Thomas that is. But read it."

King placed the sheet of paper on the dressing table.

"I don't want to read Mrs. Adair's letters," he said.

"Considerate of you," laughed the other, but he winced. After a silence, he added: "A boy brought it while you were busy with the fiddler. It appears that Eversley has deserted the lady, and that she is doing a turn in one of the picture houses here in town. She is 'sorry,' and wants to be taken back. How's that, eh?"

"Well, when are you going to get her?" asked King.

"Get her? I don't just get you, Johnny."

"I suppose you'll cancel your matinée to go after her? That's what I mean."

"Go after her? Not much! If you'd seen the answer I sent her! Go after her! Why, that's rich. Listen. I told her I was done with her, now and forever. I told her if Eversley had cast her off, the best place for her was the gutter—where she belonged. I told her if she came here or attempted to see me at any time, I would have her arrested for vagrancy. I told her I was done, and I mean—"

"You don't!" cut in King sharply. "If I thought you did, I would leave you this minute, and never willingly set eyes on you again. God, Adair, how you can hurt a woman you love and who loves you!"

"You know you're not out on the stage now—there's nobody here to applaud your heroics," sneered the other man. "I mean every word I wrote. I am done with her. Eversley's let her go—she comes back to me. Ha, the nerve of it! The actress in her! She don't know me."

King tapped the note significantly with his forefinger.

"Yes, she does. And because she does, she sent you that letter. Janet knows that you love her in spite of everything, that you will always love her in spite of everything, and that is why she wrote to you. If she didn't believe in your love, she would never have done it—she is not that kind of woman."

"Know her pretty well, don't you?"

"Seemingly better than I know you, Adair. Yes, I've known Janet for six years—as long as I've known you, almost. Come here, Doug."

He had stepped to the dressing-room door; and, opening it, pointed to the De Lyte Sisters, who were still occupying the center of the stage and the attention of the orchestra leader.

"Have a look out there," he said to Adair.

Adair grunted and turned away.

"Those two loud, coarse girls, you mean?" he sniffed.

"Yes, typical picture-house girls. They're here with you and me for a time, but in the small-time houses they belong, and in the small-time houses they'll end. Pretty ordinary, aren't they? Not wicked—I don't mean that—but ill-bred, illiterate; the kind other women look askance at when they pass in the street. Well, they're Janet's associates in the picture house where she is trying to earn a living. There! Never mind what she did do! That was yesterday. To-day she sent for you. The question is: Are you going to her or not?"

"I am not!" answered Adair, bringing his fist down on the table.

King nodded and moved toward the door. On the threshold he paused, and turned.

"Then I am going to get her," he said. Adair half rose to his feet.

"You!"

"Yes, I."

"Why?"

King looked him steadily in the eyes, and the other man's gaze faltered. "Remember my telling you about the One and Only, the Old and Original, the girl whose spring has turned to summer? You do, do you? All I ask you, Adair, is to divorce her as quickly as you can."

Adair was a big man of fine physique. King was undersized. But when Adair sprang at him, pulling him back in the little dressing room, much in the manner a lion does a lamb, King ducked, and tripped him so that he fell heavily in one corner, a trifle dazed. Then he sat down on the trunk and waited for the actor to rise.

"You seem to take things pretty strangely considering you had just sent the lady to the gutter, where you said she rightfully belonged," observed the headliner mildly.

Adair swore out loud.

"Why, you—you shrimp!" he raged. "Do you think she'd look at you? You're only a baby in long trousers, and with thin hair. Janet used to say she admired men who were men."

King nodded.

"Like yourself, and like Eversley. Both of you six-footers, I know," he said. "Perhaps, after the experience she has had with men who are men, she may now care to try life with a man whose only asset is a human heart which is capable of loving always with a sort of doglike, never-questioning faith. We'll see, Adair."

For a second, the two stood there looking into each other's eyes. Then Adair said:

"Are you in earnest, King?"

"I am."

"And—the other—Eversley?"

"After a man has waited six years, and is forty, he doesn't stop to argue with love when he has a chance to grasp it, even if that chance comes only on the rebound."

Adair groaned, covering his painted face with his hands.

"Jack, I can't," he said, in agony. "She left me for him. I can't, man. I'm not built that way. In the six years of our married life, she was the only woman who counted two pins' worth with me. Eversley—she knew what he was, was afraid for little Kathie Gordon when he entered the company. That's the truth. She was sincere there. She knew he was no account, and I—she knew I worshiped her."

"It's the act and not the word which counts the biggest," King said, a trifle wearily. "You sit there and say you worship her. I am saying nothing; but when I find her, she shall never want for another thing so long as she lives. My salary is greater than yours is, Adair. And we can go to Europe. I can get contracts in any capital of Europe at any time. Can you do that?"

No! You're on your last legs. A legitimate actor in vaudeville; and your name will carry you only two seasons at most. Heads you lose, tails I win; eh? Adair, you've made a grave mistake."

In his gay *Romeo* suit, the actor sat there at his table staring at King like a big, dazed child. He hung on every word the other spoke, seemingly turning them over in his mind, as if searching for some hidden meaning. As King moved again toward the door, he put out a hand to stay him.

"There's Eversley always like a specter—" he began, when King cut him short with a quick:

"Damn Eversley!"

He opened the door an inch and looked out; and, as he did so, Adair jumped up, overturning a chair, and brought him back again. The big man was shaking like a woman, pale beneath his make-up; but he held King pinned against the wall until he winced with pain.

"She's mine, King; she's mine, I tell you!" Adair kept repeating. "She's my wife! Don't you remember what it says about that—about husbands and wives? Those whom God hath—Damn you, King, Janet's my wife! Mine!"

The headliner looked at him from half-closed eyes, and a cynical smile lit up his face as he tried to shake off the other's hold.

"Let go!" he said. "Your sentiments sound pretty good, and they go big in the third act every time; but they're out of date on Broadway; and there's no applauding gallery in this six-by-eight cubby-hole. You said you were done with Janet Adair. After you've sent her to the gutter, surely you can't object if I pick her out of it, and—take—her—away!"

The last few words came a little thickly, for Adair had seized him by the coat collar, and was shaking him back and forth like a terrier does a rat. King struggled with his hands, and kicked the other's shins smartly; but he was like a child in Adair's grasp, and fell, a breathless heap in the corner, when the actor had finished with him.

He remained there in a half-sitting posture, watching Adair from under his sandy lashes while he got out of his *Romeo* suit, and struggled into coat and trousers, sans vest, collar, or cravat.

Buttoning his overcoat across his chest, Adair moved toward the door.

"Where are you going?" whimpered King.

Unconsciously Adair's head went up, and, from his full six feet, he answered, almost defiantly:

"I'm going to get Mrs. Adair and bring her home—if she'll come after that note of mine. But whether she does or not, remember she is my wife, and hands off, King!" His voice broke, and he added humbly, as if to himself: "When she knows how I've—suffered, I think Janet'll forgive even that note, too."

After the door had slammed behind him, King remained there on the floor for several minutes perfectly motionless. But his face was wreathed in smiles, even while tears stood in his mild blue eyes.

A timid knock at the door brought him to his feet. It was Kathie Gordon, a slim, pretty figure in *Juliet's* flowing robes, and whose voice shook perceptibly when, one hand supporting her against the frame, she addressed King directly for the first time since their introduction that day.

"I wanted to ask if anything has happened," said she. "I just saw Mr. Adair go out the stage entrance. His face was thick with make-up, and the sister act was laughing. I thought—he seemed in such a hurry—"

"He has gone to get Mrs. Adair," King told her. "He received a letter from her. She is in the city, and he's gone to bring her here."

Kathie Gordon gave a low, glad cry.

"Thank God!" she murmured. "He had never forgotten her for a moment, and it was changing his whole nature."

King nodded.

"I understand," he said. "It—it almost stunned me when I returned from the other side and heard about the trouble—they were an ideal couple! I took

an oath that I'd do what I could to patch things up between 'em, and, well—" He nursed his right arm, all black and bruised from Adair's iron grip. "You're looking well. How have you been?" he added, a little awkwardly.

"Quite well, thank you," she answered, with a certain calmness, albeit her face turned scarlet. "Mr. and Mrs. Adair have been very charming to me. I've played in their companies for the past four years, you know."

"I know," he nodded.

She glanced up, gave him the ghost of a smile, and turned to go.

"Yes, I'm so glad—for both their sakes," she said.

King cleared his throat.

"Kathie!" he said.

"Yes?" half turning.

His voice came hoarsely.

"Kathie, six years ago I wanted to ask you something. I couldn't—with thirty dollars a week salary."

"As if that mattered!" she cried out.

All at once she was strong where he was weak, and her words held a passionate note which was wholly new, but very sweet.

"I couldn't do it," he said, shaking his head. "But now I'm getting twelve hundred—yes, it's the same old Market Street stuff, only now I'm a London favorite. Kathie, for six years I've wanted to ask you to marry me. You're the One, the Only, the Original—" He was laughing now. "Kathie, say yes."

The stage door opened and closed again; and, looking up, Johnny King saw a man and a woman enter the theater and hurry toward the dressing rooms. Kathie gave a little sigh of satisfaction. Slipping her arm through King's, they went down to meet the Adairs.

And from the region of the footlights came the rasping voices of the De Lye Sisters rehearsing their bear-cat number.



## OUT OF THE LEES

**O**UT of the lees of a thousand loves  
I'll brew a cup for you,  
For it may prove the love of them all,  
Most pure, most rare and true.

Fragrant with memories, bitter and sweet,  
Is the cup of love I brew,  
Will you drink or dash it from my hand  
Because the last are you?

Would you have been the first fair love,  
The nectar of early youth?  
Or would you have been the one who killed  
The lie of love with truth?

Or would you have been the light, light loves,  
That lulled the years to sleep?  
Then put by the cup or hurl it away—  
Your protestations keep!

But if you would be the Spirit of Love,  
The Dream of the Cup come true,  
Drink to the last—the goldenest drop;  
And fold me close to you.

VIRGINIA KLINE.

THE motor, carrying Mrs. James Warburton and her daughter, was held up a second at the corner of Twenty-third Street by the florist's, and the glare of the electric lamp shone on the ladies as they sat swathed and wrapped about by the furs and velvets of their evening cloaks.

Mrs. Warburton, the taller of the two, held her head well, and the light of the city lamps refracted from the jeweled aigret in her hair.

Miss Warburton wore neither jewels nor feathers, nor did the light find her face, though it fell like snow upon the white satin of her knee, gleaming between the open folds of her velvet cloak.

The momentary obstruction delaying the motor removed, they went rapidly down Fifth Avenue, past cabs and busses, motors and carriages, to Miss Cynthia Warburton's first ball.

Her first ball—her introduction to the fashionable New York world, of which her father and mother were important factors—was to take place this night.

Eighteen years had been required to make Cynthia Warburton, to compose her, educate, finish, and bring her out; to cut and prune her down; to disenchant her as far as eighteen can be disenchanted before the real curtain is drawn. She was now sufficiently subdued, denaturalized, to be eligible for the smart set, and if Mrs. Warburton's face could have been read in the electric light which the motor's own lamp

cast, one could have read that Mrs. Warburton was not entirely satisfied with the result.

She looked bored to extinction as well as anxious; but her daughter, her cheeks softly flushed, her slim throat craned above her fur collar, leaned forward with eyes shining, her lips parted in a happy smile. Cynthia was about to quaff at last the wine of worldly excitement. The draft was at her lips at last, offering the intoxication that life holds out to eighteen—to youth on its first adventure, to a pretty girl at her first ball.

She was not anxious or nervous, she was not thinking of herself. She was imagining the ball. How charming the scene would be with the flowers and the music! And her mother's voice made her start.

"Cynthia, your fan."

From the folds of her cloak the girl lifted the ostrich feathers between her gloved fingers.

"Cynthia, you must be a success tonight."

The girl murmured:

"I hope I shall have a good time, mamma."

"Don't be shy or absent-minded, for Heaven's sake. Try to remember."

The girl's reply was lost. The motor slipped into file. The snow began to fall. It was January, and the lights gleamed through the flakes. Her heart beat in her slender side against the satin and the lace. Her little foot in its silver shoe tapped the floor. And as she leaned forward, the light fell full upon

her at last. Mrs. Warburton sat back in the shade. She bit her lips, the tears sprang to her eyes. Heavens! What if she should weep! She quickly pressed her handkerchief to her eyes.

The motor rolled up before a wide-fronted house. The door was thrown open, and the ladies stepped out, and fluttered, like moths to the flame, up the carpeted steps to the light of the open door.

The house Mrs. Warburton and her daughter entered hoped to entertain a distinguished guest this evening—the Duke of Northlands, a young peer who had shown himself partial to American women, and who it was generally understood was ready to take an American wife.

Mrs. De Fluyte, who was giving the cotillion, had a beautiful daughter Cynthia Warburton's age, already a *débutante*, and a successful one. Mrs. De Fluyte had her intentions, and was encouraged by the fact that the young man had danced several times with her daughter at other houses, although he had not as yet been within her own.

Cynthia Warburton, by a group of palms and azaleas, looked out timid and enraptured on the ballroom and the world. This was not a masked ball, but Mrs. Warburton was masked, as were no doubt others of the older women and men; only for them the bell would never ring for the unmasking.

"Cynthia," Mrs. Warburton thought, turning her long nose at her daughter, "looks about ten years old; not awkward, but timid; not '*ingénue*,' but '*trop simple*'; yet her dress cost four hundred dollars. And those small pearls are perfect, and, as pearls go now, couldn't be matched for thirty thousand. *Why doesn't she dance?* Why doesn't her hostess see that she dances? Cynthia is in one of her absent-minded moods. My heavens!"

Mrs. Warburton was not irreverent. She meant every solemn word she said, or breathed, or thought to-night.

"Cynthia must count to-night somehow. There, they've presented Fred De Payster to her, but he doesn't ask

her to dance. Why? She's pretty enough! *Or does he know?"*

Mrs. Warburton could not make signs across the room to her flowerlike girl, who, white and slim by the palms, stood mutely, apparently unconscious that she must tell or count. She seemed to be enjoying the scene, much as a child at the *Punch and Judy*. One white-gloved hand touched a spray of the camellia, like whose pure, untouched flower she herself was.

The floor was soon covered with dancers. Here and there a young woman whose seasons were counting up sat and gossiped, but before long even the chaperons, many of them, had partners, and Cynthia Warburton still remained where she was by the palms.

Mrs. De Fluyte herself was dancing, but she saw the girl. She disliked Mrs. Warburton intensely. The Warburtons were nearly as rich as they were reported, and Mrs. Warburton's pride and arrogance made her unpopular. Moreover, when the De Fluytes first came from Indianapolis, they had been snubbed by the Warburtons. Nevertheless, the lady said to her partner: "Go and dance with Cynthia Warburton, who is standing by the palms. This is her first ball."

Mrs. De Fluyte's partner, who danced atrociously, and was therefore easy to release, did as he was bid, nearly falling over the girl's dress, and they waltzed out into the middle of the room. The couple was conspicuous. Cynthia was a *débutante*, and with the worst dancer in the room. She shortly excused herself, her good nature unruffled, and her partner led her back to her palm retreat, for they had stopped there.

Mrs. Warburton could not catch her daughter's eye. She could only murmur to herself, for the president of the Stock Exchange was speaking to her: "Cynthia must sink or swim now for herself." She felt her part was done.

Cynthia had been educated entirely abroad. For a fortnight only in the last October she had seen some of her parents' friends at Newport. Immediately on their return to town she had developed typhoid fever, and during her ill-

ness her mother's great fear had been that they would have to cut her hair.

Meanwhile the débutante's mind was working practically. The man with the single eyeglass, talking with Mrs. De Fluyte, was no doubt the Duke of Northlands. He looked like men she had seen in the Bois when she walked there with her governess.

Mrs. Warburton thought: "Cynthia is a failure from the start. Marcia De Fluyte doesn't even present any one to her. I wish I hadn't fetched her tonight. It's an open insult."

She grew pale. She watched the men choosing their partners for the cotillion, and an older man joined her daughter. With a sigh of relief, she turned away her eyes, that could have shed real tears.

A young man, more shy than Cynthia Warburton, had wandered in late to Mrs. De Fluyte's, and if it were not his first ball his bored expression indicated that he wished it would be his last.

He went first to the smoking room, and sat down for a bit unobserved by the older men, one or two of whom were drinking whisky and sodas, and smoking.

The young man took a high ball, and, as he sipped it indifferently, listened to two gentlemen, members evidently of the financial world, talking at his side. They observed sharply, in a confidential tone, the state of unrest in Wall Street. One of them said:

"There's a feverish excitement running through every one."

"Yes," returned the other, "and if you have anything in the Galesworth Trust, take it out."

The other man laughed.

"I own some Palisade property. Do you think the cliffs will crumble before morning?"

"No," returned the other, "but I think"—and he said a name which the young man did not catch—"that Jimmy — will."

The notes of the "Merry Widow" waltz came lightly into the room where they sat, upon the morbid prognostication of ruin and the hint of dishonor.

The young man rose languidly, his hands in his pockets, and strolled into the ballroom. He had not done his duty. He was languid and disgruntled. He hated balls. He was about to go and speak to the hostess and her daughter when he saw the latter led out in the cotillion, and Mrs. De Fluyte was not in evidence.

He slipped aside to the group of palms. He was not the only evader of the dance apparently, for a young girl in a white dress said, in response to a kind voice, which asked: "Why, my dear Miss Warburton, you've no partner for the cotillion!" "Please, please don't bother. I am sure some one would have asked me, only, of course, they thought I had a partner."

The young man, to whom she had not been introduced, led Miss Warburton into the room.

"I dance vilely, abominably," he murmured. "You dance well, I am sure. You all do, you know, rippin'ly. I expect one *does* have to dance here."

Mrs. Warburton saw her daughter and her daughter's partner take their places for the cotillion. She saw the hostess and her daughter speak to the couple, and Cynthia was drawn into what seemed a magic circle. The music began deliciously soft and seductive, and a servant came up to Mrs. Warburton and gave her a message. She followed him out of the ballroom, leaving her débutante a shining, snowy girl in the midst of the dance, and did not send for her, and did not even tell her that she was going home.

The débutante, who danced divinely, her arms full of favors, and her face radiant, and her eyes sparkling, looked with new eyes upon the spectacle of sudden success. Then her partner led her through the crowded room after the cotillion toward the conservatory.

As they passed the door of the ballroom, some one stopped Miss Warburton, and gave her a message. She put out her little hand, raising her shy, happy face to her companion.

"I must say good night, thank you. It was a lovely dance. You don't dance atrociously, not a bit. Good night. My

mother has gone home with a headache. I am to go at once. Good night."

"Let me take you home, will you?"

"Oh, no!" She laughed, and shook her head. "I should say not! Mrs. De Fluyte is looking for you. She will be scandalized. You must go back at once to the others."

"Your things."

A footman with a mass of lace and velvet over his arm came up to Miss Warburton, to help her to an early departure, and save her the annoyance of going to the dressing rooms.

The Duke of Northlands wrapped Miss Warburton in her cloak, got into his own things rapidly, and the door opened which had lately let her in to her first ball; and she passed out, now a young woman of society, ran down the carpeted steps to her motor, and Northlands followed her.

Now the lamplight from the electric motor lamp fell on her in her corner, on her flushed, charming little face, on her white satin knee visible between the darker folds of her cloak.

"You ought really *not* to come with me," she murmured, and thought how very amusing and strange it was to have a duke taking her home after her first ball. Yet how very simple it seemed!

"Why not?" he said. "I hate late functions. It is a happy escape. Do you know Sir Thomas Lawrence?"

And Cynthia, who was about to reply, "No, she had never met him," was spared the blunder, for Northlands said:

"There is a jolly Lawrence in the library at home. When I saw you tonight I thought the picture had come to life."

"Really?" she breathed.

Singularly enough, although her parents were so worldly, she knew nothing whatsoever of society. She had scarcely ever been to a party, and this all went in with her idea of what a first ball should be. The drive home now in the falling snow with an English nobleman, indeed, with any man, had not crossed her imagination as possible.

The young man sat around frankly in his seat, his white-gloved hands clasped.

He looked fearlessly out of young, clear eyes.

"Do you know, I haven't an idea of what your name is."

"Cynthia Warburton."

"It is an old English name," he replied, with interest. "There are heaps and heaps of Warburtons in Sussex. Do you like England?"

She had never seen it.

"Here," she told him, after a few seconds, "is our corner. We're home."

"No, no," exclaimed the Englishman. "You don't mean it. Ah—could not we—can we—or, I say—would it be *too* dreadful to go on? Isn't there a park near here?"

He took up the tube, looked at her, and answered for her, as she did not forbid him:

"Central Park."

And the motor, instead of turning into the blank street, rolled serenely on.

Wilfred, seventh Duke of Northlands, had been spoiled ever since he was a boy. He had been the life and go of his set at Eton, a wild, gay young man at Cambridge. He always had what he wanted, and took it when he wanted it. He was not as young as he looked, although his heart and spirit were boyish and youthful. He had come to America more in search of an ideal than a wife. He had vaguely dreamed of some one, even when he was a little boy under the Sir Thomas Lawrence in the library. He had flirted a great deal in England, but he had not found a girl or woman he had wanted to make the Duchess of Northlands.

Cynthia Warburton was the sweetest, dearest thing his eyes had ever rested on. He had seen her standing like a little white fairy, lonely by the palms. The fall of her pretty white dress, her arms and neck, the little wreath in her hair, the filminess of her, and her sweet grace, suggested the picture. She had been adorable when she danced, and the touch of her in his arms, although he had never seen her before, awakened in the young Englishman a curiously sweet emotion.

They passed into the magic inclosure of the park.

"Really," he exclaimed, "this is your first ball! Why, you are as new, then, to the world as this snow is, and you looked as white as the flakes when I saw you standing near the palms."

Cynthia knew that compliments and flatteries were part of what is meant by "being out" and meeting men, but although she tried to look at her companion easily her heart fluttered, and, young as she was, she felt that she had come suddenly near to something which she had no rules for, did not know by sight, and didn't understand. She sat helplessly in her corner, and as the road grew wider and the park darker, she murmured:

"Tell them to turn around, will you, please? Tell them to drive home."

Northlands did not obey her. He leaned over, and covered her small hands with his.

"You will think me mad," he murmured; "perfectly mad."

He didn't finish. He kissed her—kissed her warm young cheek, whose perfume was like a tea rose.

Then he said:

"Of course, you won't believe me. I hardly know how to say it, but I fell in love with you when I saw you under the palms, and heard you say no one had asked you to dance. Your name is not even familiar to my lips, but you are like the picture I have loved ever since I was a boy. I have fallen in love with you, and I have to go back to England to-morrow. I want to tell you this before I go."

He told her this holding her in his arms, his heart beating. Then, breathing deeply, he sat back, stirred as he had never been in his young life. The girl was immovable. She made no sign whatever. He took up the tube, and, speaking into it, bade the chauffeur to drive home.

When Mrs. Warburton came into her house, summoned as she had been from the ball by a message from her husband, she found him standing in the window of his upper library, looking out at the falling snow. She threw off her cloak, drew off her gloves, and sat

down by the fire, turning her hands to its warmth. After a pause, she said: "Well, James?" and her husband left the window, and came over to her.

"Where's Cinny?"

"At the ball. I left her at the De Fluytes'."

Mrs. Warburton did not remove her gaze from the fire. She preferred not to see her husband's face, for she knew that the expression of it would cut and pain her, and that her scrutiny of him would embarrass him.

"I wanted you both to come home." He cleared his throat. "I didn't wish anything said while you and Cinny were at the ball."

"I wanted to give her her chance," replied the mother. "Her only chance." Here she lifted her eyes.

Mr. Warburton, who was a man of distinguished looks, and prided himself upon his elegance, actually looked unkempt, and his face was scarred by what his wife knew were marks of exhaustion or tears and defeat.

Again she said quietly: "Well, James?"

He drew a small chair up to her side, and sat down, and spoke in an undertone, though no one could have heard in the shut-in, curtained room.

"I have given every penny of my fortune, and all of yours, and everything that we have laid aside for the girl."

His wife's hand, which she held as a screen before her face, trembled.

"It means?"

"That I am as poor as my father was when he married in Cincinnati. He had fifty cents in his pocket, but he was a young man."

After a second she said again, "Well, James?" and he understood what the tense question meant.

"There will be no public dishonor," he replied slowly. "That is, there will be no public scandal. I am as penniless as the poorest creditor. What can they ask more? The public will know that I have sacrificed everything. What can they find to say?" After a pause, he said: "By this everybody knows of the failure, all the big men and the con-

cerns. The trust company will not open its doors to-morrow."

Mrs. Warburton murmured: "Was there no other way out of it without disonor?"

He gestured that there was not. Whatever Mrs. Warburton thought regarding herself—she had grown used to an income of two hundred thousand dollars a year—whatever she thought of her daughter, she only said: "Poor James!"

The man at her side gave a sob in his throat. He slipped down from his chair to his knees, and she laid her hands on his head, and the light flashed on her rings. As she saw them sparkle she thought: "There are these, and my pearls, and the rest. No doubt James will sell them to pay the depositors."

She bent over her husband. Then she lifted her head.

"Hark! There is the motor. Cinny is back."

She helped her husband to rise to his feet.

Mrs. Warburton went out into the hall. There was no sound to indicate that Cynthia had returned. She expected to see her daughter run up the stairs, to welcome her, and to send her, ignorant of the disaster, up to bed. But as evidently the débutante lingered, this led her mother to believe Cynthia's success had been assured, and, instead of going back to the library, she went into her own dressing room in a desire to be alone.

She wondered vaguely, unable to form a clear idea on any subject in her agitation, what her husband would do? Men, in less equivocal positions than James Warburton, blew out their brains. She did not think her husband would do this. She knew him to be possessed of a dogged perseverance that would carry him over this horrible crisis. She had seen him through crises before—when no one else had dreamed of their existence. He was only forty-eight years old. He would even recover somewhat. Certain friends of his would come to his aid, lend him money. He

would, in all probability, pull out in some way.

And Cinny was on the eve of her young life. What in the cold-hearted, snobbish world in which the Warburtons had taken the coldest, hardest part, would be Cynthia's social career? She could have none. She was finished before she began. Poor little Cinny!

Her mother knew very little of her only child. She had separated herself from her daughter for years. She had not wanted to grow old, and the presence of the girl would have been a hindrance to her own success, too lovely a bud in the prolonged summer of the mother's youth. She was ambitious for her, nevertheless. She had intended taking her abroad, and marrying her to a title. Everything of this kind would be out of the question now.

Mrs. Warburton walked gently to and fro in her room, among her luxurious belongings.

She had not thought very much about herself. She was so proud, so repressed, so cold. She really never could come face to face with her own identity without embarrassment. She was too reserved to see her own ego with ease. She shrank from any nudity of soul. To her it was bad breeding to think very much about one's self. Looking up now, she saw her husband's form in the door between the two rooms.

He said abruptly to her: "Fanny, I wonder if you quite grasp it?"

"I think I do, James." She faintly smiled. "Ruin and disgrace are not very familiar, you know. It takes time to get acquainted with them. We have only just been introduced."

"No." He shook his head. "You don't take it in. I thought you didn't. We will have to leave New York as soon as we can."

She stopped in her walk, the gems in her aigret sparkled as richly as they had at Mrs. De Fluyte's ball. Her satin train lay along the floor.

"Leave New York, James?"

"If there is any way that I can retrace and begin again, if a man of my age can begin again, it should be in some place where I am less known."

"I don't agree with you," his wife said evenly. "Here you have a wide circle of influence. There are a dozen men who will stand by you."

Her husband shrugged his shoulders.

"You don't know what you say," he returned. "There are a dozen men who would stand by a millionaire, not one who would stand by James Warburton on the ground he is forced to plant himself, not to speak of the general public."

"I have noticed," his wife said emphatically, "that the men who remain in their own city after trouble are the ones who eventually slowly creep back."

"Ah," breathed the banker heavily, "creep back. Fanny, do you want me to creep back?"

"Oh, I mean to say," she corrected, but her husband interrupted her.

"No, you said the proper thing, but if I ever get back I don't intend to crawl. I want to break a new way."

Mrs. Warburton respected her husband. She respected his mind, his talent. She had come up with him from simple living, had gone alongside with him to his wealth.

"Had you thought of any place, James, or have you any scheme?"

"Twenty minutes ago I had none. Now I should like to go to Spokane Falls, or even a smaller place."

"James!"

He would have smiled at his wife's face at any other time.

"We have never been farther West than Chicago."

In their Eastern snobbism they had despised the West.

"A man from Buffalo," Warburton said, "came to the office some days ago, to offer a real-estate business in Spokane Falls for sale. It was not much of a business, but we all of us thought it to be valuable in the future, and we would have bought it"—Warburton waited a moment—"if we had possessed the funds available to do so. Of course, I can't purchase that business, but the man who has it now would take me on as an assistant. I did his father a valuable turn some twenty years ago, and he has the grace to be appreciative of the fact."

"James!"

The husband and wife faced each other. She had not imagined such a transition as this, grave as she knew the state of things to be. She was stunned, nonplussed; and looked adversity in the face suddenly, and shrank from it.

The door opened, and they both started.

Cynthia, white like a little bride, stood in the doorway between their rooms. The brighter light was behind her. She sparkled.

"Mamma, mamma, are you there?" She came quickly in. "Oh, mother," she murmured. "Father!"

She used names she had never used to them. She came quickly forward, and her own agitation was such that she was oblivious of theirs.

"Oh, mother!"

She clasped her hands around Mrs. Warburton's bare arm.

Mrs. Warburton looked down on her daughter, and the ice melted around the mother's heart, which nothing but a tragedy had sufficient power to break. Mrs. Warburton thought she looked only at an eager débutante, dazzled by her first ball, dazzled by the world. She thought she saw only a supreme moment of girlish delight.

"But, Cynthia, you are horribly late."

Mr. Warburton stepped back a little, into the next room, even more dimly lit. He wanted to hide the traces of his grief.

The lace across the girl's bosom rose and fell in a little storm. Her hair was in pretty disorder. The color in her cheeks was delicate and soft.

"Oh, mother!" There was a catch in her voice. "How can I tell you, and father?"

"Tell us?" murmured Mrs. Warburton, and she now saw that the emotion on her daughter's face was too great to have been caused by the excitement even of a first ball.

"For Heaven's sake," she cried, turning to her husband, "what can Cinny have to tell?"

"Mother," breathed the girl, "no one asked me to dance the cotillion. I was forgotten, just a wallflower, as lots of

other girls have been. And it hurt you; I know it did. I saw you watch my failure. Well, I didn't seem to please, did I? But, in the end—"

She was speaking swiftly; her words came fast and breathlessly. Mr. Warburton came out of the shadow, and put his arm around his daughter's waist. She leaned on him.

"Well, little girl, what happened at the end?"

Against the dark figure of the man she clung, white as snow; her hand was in her mother's.

"Why, at the end some one did come and ask me, and I danced the cotillion with him. He's downstairs, mother, father, waiting. We have been in the house talking in the drawing-room for an hour. He wants you—he wants to tell you— Oh, I know how strange it is, how strange you will think it!"

Mr. Warburton felt her tremble from head to foot. He looked over at his wife. Over the moment of his disaster, of the disgrace and dishonor, of the wreck of home and fortune, came the problem of this child's emotion, and the question of her young life. Neither father nor mother had ever felt any great responsibility about her before.

"Cynthia," said Mrs. Warburton, "what is he waiting for? Who is he? What in Heaven's name—"

"Wait," said the father gently. "Let Cinni tell. Let her tell in her own way."

Cynthia gathered herself together.

"Why, it is the Duke of Northlands. He has asked me to marry him. He is waiting to ask you. He has to go back to England to-morrow."

She came a little out from her father's embrace.

Northlands waited in the drawing-room of the Warburtons' house before the fire that had burned out an hour ago, under the electric light that would not burn out. The extravagance of the millionaire's house did not impress him. It was far less beautiful than Haldon Hall, the place of his ancestors. He was not thinking of things, or of millions.

He was a very impulsive young man. Very!

People who knew him expected of him rash, impractical things, extraordinary things, and were not disappointed. He was very rich. He had done mad things with his money, but he had a great deal of it—one of the biggest fortunes in England. He was also simple and direct, and though he had been guilty of follies and extravagances, he was nevertheless surprised at himself just now.

Near the fire was the divan on which he had been sitting with the American girl for an hour. The corner of the little sofa seemed to hold her still. She was the dearest, sweetest—the dearest little thing, the sweetest! He had kissed beauties many times. He had said sweet things before, but this was the sweetest evening of his life, the kisses the sweetest, and the touch of Cynthia Warburton the most thrilling touch that had ever made his pulses quiver. He had gone very far in what he said. He had been quite, quite mad.

Pulling his fair mustache, and smiling, he stood waiting, for she had told him to wait, that she wanted him to see her father and mother. The portrait on the walls of Haldon Hall swam before his eyes. He contrasted it with Cynthia Warburton, and the portrait faded. As if she had been made love to all her life, she had gone without resistance to his arms. Had she been made love to before? No, he didn't believe it. She was too naive, too sweet, the bloom was all there. He had been told that American girls were tremendous flirts. He had not found them all formal.

The curtains of the next room were pushed aside. He saw three people come in, but he looked at Cynthia.

"My father and mother—the Duke of Northlands."

The young man shook hands with a handsome woman in a ball dress, with a pale man in a smoking jacket. He glanced at Cynthia. She was smiling at him almost pathetically, but very charmingly.

"I was obliged to go early from the ball," said Mrs. Warburton, and sat

down on the divan, and drew Cynthia beside her. "My husband was not very well."

She hardly knew what she said; one excitement had come so fast upon another. She thought Cynthia had been made the plaything of by a worldly man—but still the fact that he waited, that he had asked to see her parents. He looked extremely young—no older than Cinny herself. He might himself have been to-night at his first ball.

"I think I didn't meet you at the De Fluytes'."

"No," he said, his hands thrust in his pockets. Warburton and he stood side by side, their backs to the fireless hearth. "I came awfully late, just for the cotillion. I was so awfully lucky as to find Miss Warburton not dancing."

Mr. Warburton took a cigar from his pocket, and offered it with a light. A servant came in with a tray of light supper, a second man fetched champagne and liqueurs. No one but Mr. Warburton took anything. He drank a glass of champagne. As he held the light for Northlands' cigar, the young man glanced at the banker's pallid face.

"I know your name well, sir," said the duke. "I have heard it everywhere. As for Wall Street, I think it is the most excitin' place I have ever been in."

The older man tried to smile; his mouth twitched.

"It is exciting!"

"America," said the duke, "makes a lazy chap ashamed."

He glanced at Cinny. She was sitting with her hand in her mother's, her eyes on the floor. She rose abruptly.

"I think I will go get a scarf. It is chilly."

"I am afraid I am keeping you awfully late," Northlands murmured, and watched the girl slip out.

Warburton himself wanted to follow her. Already it seemed to the older man that the ice was freezing over his head. He felt frozen to death. The strain of years, months, and days culminated in this second. He knew that his state, his reputation would ruin the prospects of his child. Now, standing before Cynthia's future, how vain, how

miserable his ambitions seemed, contrasted with the simple honor he could have given his daughter as heritage if he had lived a simpler, more honorable life.

He glanced at his wife on the sofa. She seemed to have grown twenty years older, and her face to have perceptibly thinned. She was playing with the long chain of pearls she wore. He had bought them for her after a fortunate speculation, when he knew the transaction was unwise, and that he should never have bought the stock from the trustees in whose name he placed the shares.

He was not fundamentally a bad man. He had gone on with others mad for wealth, determined to be rich. He had made haste to be rich, and no one was as poor in his own eyes as he this night. The gods of his house had fallen about him, and only this fair, unconscious child, whose future he was about to ruin, and his wife, whose life henceforth would be dreary, were left to him out of the disaster and the history of thirty years.

Mrs. Warburton extended her hand to the Duke of Northlands, and said gently:

"Will you come over here and sit down by me? My daughter has told me something very extraordinary, something at which I am very much surprised. I cannot quite believe that Cinny knows what life is. She tells me that you want to say something to us."

Northlands looked first at the mother, then at Cynthia's father. Mrs. Warburton saw. She seemed bewildered. She thought she understood.

"I expect," she said, smiling, as he sat down beside her, "that you have been flirting with a very foolish girl. She tells me—well, really, I hardly know what Cynthia did say. What was it, James?"

The father was unable to speak. In his heart he hoped that a cataclysm would destroy them all as they stood there, before his own miserable condition should be set forth to this young nobleman, before his daughter should know. He passed his hand across his

forehead, and looked vaguely at his wife and Northlands.

Northlands, turning his candid eyes on Mrs. Warburton, asked simply:

"What did she say I wanted to tell you?"

"That you wanted to marry her."

If it was sudden to him, and tremendous to him, he made no sign to that effect.

"Well," he said, still smiling, "I think I do."

There was a moment's silence. Mrs. Warburton's hands tightened in her lap. The father before the fireplace did not move a muscle.

"I am going to England to-morrow. Have to go back. Can't possibly put it off another ship, and so, you see, I have been bowled over by"—and he said her name—"Cynthia. You will think it's most awfully sudden."

He laughed a little boyishly. With his sudden taking of the leap, a courage came to him, a certainty, and as he said her name, he seemed again to feel the touch of her.

"You know who I am," he said simply. "I know Mr. Warburton's name and reputation. Everybody does. Should I be likely to have a chance?"

The silence that fell, the terrible silence which neither father nor mother could break, impressed him. At first he thought it was the absurdity of the proposition, the utter ridiculousness of his seeking to marry a girl whom four hours before he had not seen. This was it, of course.

"I didn't expect, of course, to take her away with me to-morrow, though I feel to-night as though I would like to. I will come back."

He rose. Mrs. Warburton rose with him.

"Yes," she breathed, the relief of the solution saving her life, as it were. "You will come back, and give us the pleasure of seeing you. You shall see Cynthia. We can talk it over." She held out her hand. "Cynthia will want to say good-by," she murmured.

Warburton stepped forward. His face was as white as the ashes behind

him on the dead hearth. He seemed to speak from chalk lips. He put out his hand, which trembled like a drunkard's, toward Northlands.

"No," he said distinctly, "I guess you won't want to come back to see us. Your proposition is extraordinary. I don't know how serious you are."

The young man interrupted him, flushing:

"I know. I didn't know until just now, but I am quite serious. I want to marry your daughter."

"Well," said the banker, "you speak of James Warburton's daughter as you know James Warburton, but"—he took his trembling hand back from the air, where it wavered, and put both hands behind him, and held them there—"to-morrow, when you get your morning papers, you will see that the Galesworth Trust will not open its doors. I am the president of that company. The whole concern has gone under, and whereas my daughter was an heiress yesterday, she has not a penny in the world to-night. I have not a penny." He moistened his lips. "You have come in on a tragedy. I am one of those ruined trust magnates you have heard about. And that is the father of the girl you want to marry."

As he finished speaking, Cynthia came back, the light thin scarf she had taken falling around her bare shoulders. This time she went over to her father, of whom she had always been a little timid, because she did not know him very well, but to whom to-night, in her deep emotion, she was drawn. She put her arms through his, and felt him trembling. She looked up at him, her own face softened, tender. She looked at her mother, and the man so lately a stranger, and to whom she believed she was to be given. Over her head, Warburton said to the nobleman:

"She does not know."

"Know what?" asked the girl, starting. And, seeing now his terrible excitement: "Papa, what is it?"

"Wait," said the Duke of Northlands, coming forward and drawing her to him. "Before you say anything, Mr. Warburton, let me say how much I love

her already, and I know I can make her happy. Will you let me come back, and have my chance?"

The mother, standing a little away from them, could not believe her ears. She could have wept aloud. What singular grace was stirring in their behalf? The young couple, between her husband and herself, between the wrecks they both were, seemed illumined by a light such as she had never seen.

"Papa," said Cynthia, "do you mean that you don't want me to be married? You think it is sudden, don't you? You can't believe it, can you?"

"My darling," said the banker, "I want to know that he fully understands."

"I think I do," said Northlands, "and it wouldn't make any difference whether I did or not. I know what I want to do."

He bent, and before them kissed the girl, and the father and mother saw her flush like a bride, for she was as pale as her dress. He put out his hand to Mr. Warburton then, and said to them both:

"I may come back? I may have my chance?"

Neither of them could speak except to bow their heads. He wrung the hand of the banker, and seemed to infuse strength by his grasp.

Cynthia flew to her father, and threw her arms about him, and Northlands said, in an undertone to Mrs. Warburton:

"Will you tell her as gently as you can? Don't let her fret about it. I shall write her to-night. Promise that you will keep up her heart."

Outside the motor, which had not been dismissed, had waited all night. It was after five o'clock. The door was opened for Northlands, and Cynthia followed him. Once more he kissed her.

There was no one to see, and he whispered as he bade her good-by:

"Don't let anything make you unhappy. Remember that, just like travelers that find an undiscovered country, we have found the best thing there is, and nothing else makes any difference."

When she came back to the library her mother was there alone. She took her in her arms and kissed her, and Mrs. Warburton's face was wet with tears. Together they went quietly up the stairs, through a house in which no object was any longer rightfully theirs, and at Cynthia's door her mother left her to go in unconscious to her girlhood's room, knowing nothing that night of tragedy; to go to bed, and dream what she might of her first ball.



## DAFFODILS

I SAW the flaming daffodils  
High on the wind-swept, tumbling hills,  
Like gold the yellow sunlight spills,  
In the light April weather.

And I thought of your long shining hair,  
Hidden beneath the churchyard there—  
Or were its bright gleams everywhere  
On the hills in the April weather!  
CHARLES HANSON TOWNE.

# The PHILOSOPHER

BY HERMAN WHITAKER

**G**ID-DAP! Nietzsche, you durned philosopher, you, gid-dap! Whar's your ambitions toward self-development? Darwin, you fitless skunk, gid-dap! Hup, there, Maeterlinck! None o' your slinking. Git on! Git on! Git!"

Mixed with the rapid-fire of a mule whip, the strange objurgations broke on the heated silence of the Sonora Desert. Certainly the most curious that were ever aimed at the flapping ears of a Mexican mule, they appeared the stranger because there was nothing in the appearance of the man who uttered them to indicate the student or man of science. On the contrary, he belonged to the exactly opposite type—the long, lean, frontier type, hot-forged by the heat of the Southwestern desert. Tall, his excessive spareness added to his height; and he was very muscular. Around his bare whip arm hard muscles twined like copper bands. At rest, his expression was stern, the eye cold and hard as blue agate; but just now it exhibited a humorous twinkle, and, as he watched the young man and woman who rode ahead of the mules, the thin, hard line of his mouth dissolved in grim puckles.

"Marion, I wonder at you!" The puckles widened into a grim as the young man's sharp protest came floating back. "He sees you laughing, and takes it as countenance for further nonsense."

But the woman—girl, rather, for she was both young, pretty, and unmarried—merely broke out with a fresh crop of giggles.

"I don't care, Vance. It really is very funny, and you must confess that we gave him cause. If we hadn't gone out of our way to attack his primitive views on things, I might feel annoyed; but as we did, I cannot blame him. I know that I have said things to shock him just to see him blush. People are becoming so complex nowadays that it is really a pleasure to come in contact with a genuine simple nature."

"After trifling with the modern and ancient cults and occults, after experiments with science and certain flights through the realms of philosophic thought, this remarkable young person came under the influence of a sturdy frontier character, and so completed the circle by accepting the orthodox Protestant creed." Extract for the biography of Miss Marion Burrows."

The sarcasm, however, only moved her to downright laughter.

"*Quien sabe, señor?* One can never foresee the end. At any rate, and even if it is not very much, he knows the things that he knows, and believes his beliefs, which is more than can be said for us. If he didn't, it wouldn't alter the fact that we drove him on to revenge."

And they surely had. College bred, both graduates in social science from a Western university, they were, with all their culture, excellent examples of the educational processes which are startlingly like the methods that a farmer uses in fattening a Christmas turkey. After several years of gulping knowledge in unchewed masses, they had each emerged with a degree and cases of

mental indigestion that were none the less acute for being quite unconscious.

Without any actual experience with the life processes and principles of which they so glibly prated, and blind to the fact that the chief difference between them and their guide was that they had received their beliefs, ready-made, from the hands of a professor instead of a preacher, they had run amuck, with all of the first enthusiasm of newly learned youth, through the guide's simple scheme of things.

Ever since, a week ago, her father—who was part owner and resident manager of a group of Mexican mines—had placed their immature destinies in the hands of Bill Chance, with instructions to get them over the American line before the Mexican revolution came to a head, the girl and her fiancé had levied ruthless war upon the customs and conventions he had been brought up to honor and reverence. Religion, patriotism, the divinity of government, sanctity of marriage, one after the other had they shattered these pillars of his faith with the dynamite of modern thought, and, capping all, her frankly expressed opinions on divorce had sent him out from their camp fire the preceding night to hide his blushes under a pretense of watering the mules.

"She's on'y a little fool." With masculine indulgence, he had let her off lightly. "She don't believe a word of it. Just wait till they're married, and some other woman tries to give him the eyes! As for him—" His opinion of Vance Leward, ardent disciple of Nietzsche, is best explained by the sudden kick he let fly at a mule. "Git up! You—damned philosopher!"

Upon this beginning he had improved, this morning, by rechristening the mules after the savants whose names lent learned spice to Vance's conversations, and within the last hour he had added the straw that broke the back of Vance's patience by weaving such scientific words and phrases as had happened to stick in his memory into the woof of his usual driving curses.

"Gid-dap! You hybrid equine! Yer grandfather was sure a crocodile."

This came floating forward through the dust of the march just as Vance had opened his mouth to reply. He shut it with a snap.

"The ignoramus! It wouldn't be so bad if he had the slightest insight into any subject above a mule; but to have so dense a fool take liberties with our conversation is just a bit too much. He will have to stop it."

"But what can you do?" she questioned. "If you discharged him, we should have to drive the mules ourselves, and we'd be lost in half an hour."

"I don't care." His rather weak face set in mulish obstinacy. "It must be stopped. I won't stand—"

"Now, Vance, don't be silly," she began soothingly, but got no further, for the guide's strong voice came driving out of the dust.

"Ole, there! Will you please bring back the glasses? I want to take a look at that dust cloud."

In the last hour they had gradually passed upward from the desert proper into a sparse grass country whose sunburned vistas were scantily dotted with paloverde and huge prickly cactus; but in their rear, mimosa and dusty sage still stretched to the eye's limit, a sad, ashen sea, shored in by the dim purple of far-off mountains. Out of its exact center rose a dust whorl which, under Vance's strong glasses, presently resolved into a half dozen horsemen riding hard on their trail. The leader wore the felt sombrero and silver-trimmed dress of a *charro*, the others the plain *manta* of common peons, and all were armed with rifles and machetes.

"Revolutionists, sure as you're born!" Bill Chance pronounced them. "No, they couldn't be soldiers nor *rurales*," he answered Vance's question. "They'd be in uniform. Yes, a big ranchman would travel with a string that way; but, man, we're thirty miles from a regular trail, and there ain't a thing but us to draw them chaps so far from a cantino."

"But we are Americans. Surely they won't bother us?"

The quaver in Vance's voice loosed

the puckers again around the other's hard mouth.

"Don't you believe it. Next to frying a Federal in his own fat, they'd love nothing so much as to boil the starch out of a gringo." Then, catching the sudden, white misery of the girl's face, he gave a reassuring laugh. "Don't be scared, miss. They haven't got us yet, and, what's more, they're not a-going to. On that ridge, about four miles ahead, there's a adobe hut that was built by some Mexican outlaw. The walls are three feet thick, and, if we can only shove the mules through before they catch up, we can hold 'em off for a month. Get around there, Mr. Leward, and head in Darwin."

For even the stress of the moment had no power to make him forgive or forget. Both then and during the ensuing quarter of an hour that they urged the string on at a lumbering gallop, his sarcastic epithets mingled with the crack of the whip, the rattle of the camp equipage

"Nietzsche! Nietzsche! You son of a gun! Spencer! You lazy old dog! Darwin! Gid-dap! This ain't a circumstance to what yuhr forefathers got!"

Even the bullet that crashed with the clash of a thousand cymbals through the frying pan in "Nietzsche's" pack, shortly after, merely drew the ironical observation:

"Why, you ignorant savages! Don't seem to know that in this age thoughts count for more than bullets."

A glance backward at that moment showed the Mexicans little more than half a mile astern, riding hard in an uneven line and shooting at random without pause to aim. After a measuring look forward at the hut that now loomed, square and black, on the ridge against the sky, Bill Chance's voice rose out of the mingled roar of hoofs and clattering packs:

"You two ride on ahead. Looks as if they're a-going to corral this string o' scientists, but I'll stay with 'em long as I can. You've got yer gun, Leward, and if they happen to plug me, open up the second a nose shows in range. They

ain't never too fond of hot lead, and if you keep pumping lively, you'll sure break their rush. After that it'll be pie and cheese to hold 'em."

All through the wild flight, Vance had kept his pale face upon his shoulder, and now, digging in the spurs, he shot to the front without so much as a glance backward to see if Marion were following.

"Well, look at that!" Bill Chance snorted his disgust. "For all he cares, she can go plumb to!" Thundering along in the tail of the train, with bullets clipping the dust all around, he sarcastically commented: "But I'm forgetting—one's first duty is to one's self? Which of 'em was it that got that off? Her, I reckon, and he's sure acting like he believed it. She hain't got nothing to expect from him, so it's plenty plain you can't afford to get yerself plugged. You'd better to light out, Billy Chance, while you can."

He did not, however, give up without a last effort to cause the enemy the greatest possible amount of trouble. One after the other, he cut the diamond hitches that bound the packs, and then drove the kicking animals along till their loads were strewn over another quarter of a mile.

"Hurt you, didn't it?" He grimly commented on the yell that went up behind. Then, as he looked ahead, the exclamation burst from him: "The damned fool! Darned if he hasn't turned loose their horses!"

Just why Vance had done it was probably a mystery to himself. But whether the result of pure funk or civilized instinct against stabbing a horse in a house, there they were, heads and tails erect, flying along the ridge; and, almost as Bill noticed it, the calamity was rendered full and complete by the sudden swerve that sent him sideways off his horse. Though bruised and shaken, he was up in a second—too late, however, to catch his beast that was galloping off at right angles to join the runaways. Nor would he have had time. Though only a hundred yards now lay between him and the hut, the *charro* was even closer, with his follow-

ing straggling out behind; and, dropping flat again, he opened fire with his Winchester.

Fired at close range, the first shot plowed endways through the *charro's* horse; the second missed, but the third broke the next man's arm, and as, yelling with pain, he wheeled and rode off, carrying with him the leader who had caught hold of his saddle strap, Bill emitted a growl.

"Now, if that fool would only open up from the house, we'd have 'em running."

It was not, however, necessary, for, turning with their companions, the others rode rapidly away, leaving him free to rise and walk to the house.

Inside, he found the two enthusiasts in philosophic science both deathly pale, and so badly shaken that Vance's exclamation issued through chattering teeth:

"Oh, I'm *so* glad you escaped!"

"Well, 't ain't none of *yuhr* fault," Bill growled. "Why in thunder didn't you turn loose with *yer* gun?"

"I couldn't. You see, it was strapped to my saddle."

"But why did you let the horses away?"

"What could I do with them?"

"Why, run 'em in here, of course." With a snort of disgust, he went on: "A pretty mess you've made of it—clean killed our get-away."

"But, see—they are going away."

"Going away? After me shooting one of their horses and plugging a man? I'd like to believe it, but all we can expect is a breathing space while they swing round to the rear. If you value your hide, just take that nice new hunting knife and gouge out a few loopholes in the back wall while I get busy with the ends. And move lively, for, if they once get close in to the walls, we're goners sure."

For reasons that were presently to be revealed, the revolutionists, however, did not make any immediate attempt. Looking out after he had driven one hole through the soft adobe, Chance saw three of them riding in a wide circle to head in the runaway beasts, while the

remainder rounded up the mules and retrieved the scattered outfit.

"Couldn't resist the loot," he read it. "Now they'll likely wait till dark. Luckily there's a full moon; 'twill be light as day all night."

But again was he wrong, for he had no more than begun on the other wall before the girl, who was looking out, called him back to the door.

"There's a man coming. It's the one whose horse you shot. He's carrying a white flag. Oh! That means peace, doesn't it?"

"Mebbe," he admitted guardedly. "It depends on the price. They ain't a-going to let us off for nothing. Why! It's Juan Cabrera!" For, as the *charro* leader drew closer, he recognized him for a muleteer who had once driven mules under him, packing supplies from the railroad into the mines. "For a Mexican, he ain't such a bad sort—and I did him a service once; downed a couple of Yaquis that were trying to cut out his heart in the mountains this side of Hermosillo."

"Then we are saved!"

"Don't take it for certain. A Mex don't look at these things in quite our way."

Nevertheless, when the *charro*, who was on foot and unarmed, rushed forward the last few yards with arms outstretched for a friendly embrace, both man and girl gave free rein to the hope that would have as quickly died had they understood his voluble Spanish.

"It is the Señor Chance. I knew it when my horse went down that none other this side of the border could draw so quick a bead. And how has it gone, *amigo*, since Hermosillo? I have not forgotten that day, señor, nor ever shall, though I am now become a leader of revolutionists. 'I shall go forward,' said I to my men; 'and, if it really prove the Señor Chance, he shall go free, though he had shot all our horses.' And as I said, so shall it be, *amigo*, if—" He whispered the last few words.

"What does he say? For God's sake don't keep us in suspense."

As Chance turned, slowly, to answer,

the characteristic puckers bunched around his mouth. While his glance passed from the man to the girl, he hesitated. Then his hard blue eye lit up with sudden mischievous lights.

"Somehow this poor fool don't seem to catch on to the fact that this is the age of reason, and brute force don't count. But he's got his rope on that 'struggle-for-existence' theory of yours, all right. He allows that seeing he has us chased into our holes, he's the 'fit,' and we're his meat. If it hadn't been for the little service I just mentioned in downing them Yaquis, he says he'd have gone right ahead and gobbled us up. As it is, he's willing to compromise. He'll let me and Mr. Leward go free, miss, if we'll give you up."

"Give me up?" She looked at him with puzzled horror. "Why—what use—"

"He allows that yer father might come through with a fat ransom. If not—you'd make a leader of revolutionists quite a nice wife, or he could sell you to some rich ranchman with a taste for American girls."

While he was speaking, the faint colors of restored hope drained away, leaving her white as a corpse, for under his grim irony she felt the stony truth. In the same circumstances, a heroine of romance would, of course, have stepped forward, a willing sacrifice; but, being merely an ordinary girl, she just stood and wrung her hands.

"Oh, but you won't, Mr. Chance. Oh, Vance!"

But, for the first time in his own sheltered life, Vance was finding himself in actual contact with a principle which he had talked about, written about, argued about with perfect calm while it related to other men and things. The races that have gone down in the ruck, the factory slaves, sweatshop workers, driven farmers, all of the miserable underlings of civilization came properly under the scope of nature's greatest law. But now that it touched himself, his philosophy drained away with his courage, leaving him an empty, flaccid thing. While the cold sweat stood out on his face, he avoided her

eyes; then blinked uneasily as he found himself under Chance's contemptuous gaze. His silence was a confession, and her quick return to Bill Chance told that she had read it aright.

"Oh, Mr. Chance, you won't——"

"Why not? According to Nietzsche, I reckon I ought. What about the 'first duty to one's self' you and him were talking about the other night? I reckon it's up to me to save my own——" Noticing that she was almost ready to faint, he broke short off. "There! There! I was only teasing. You bet your life I won't."

"*Si, señor!*" As he turned back to him, the Mexican spoke. "It is that you will do as——"

"Oh, you are too funny, Juan." He ran on, bantering him in easy Spanish. "I'd always given you credit for having a little more sense than your mules. Do you take me for a *pelado*?"

"Then it is 'no'? But what use, señor? In the end——"

"You will not get her alive." As their humor subsided, his blue eyes resolved into their native agate. "And in the meantime, I'll plug a few more of you, keeping a special sharp eye open for your pertickler beef. Better move on, Juan—while you can. You've already got our horses and outfit, and there are plenty more girls in the towns."

But the man shrugged.

"Fine talk, señor, but it will soon be dark, and then——"

"Bright moonlight so that I can spot you easily as by day. And if that's the way it is going, I might as well begin by getting you now."

"*Señor!*" His eyes, brows, hands, and shoulders rose in shocked surprise. "You would not fire on a flag of truce!"

"And why not? Of course, I know that such disregard of the usages of war would be a dreadful hurt to my feelings; but, as I'm to be killed right away in any case, I reckon I could stand it that long. No, I don't see no good reason why I shouldn't just take your beef while I can."

He spoke with such seriousness, reaching for his gun, that the

man's look of shocked surprise flashed into genuine alarm.

"Señor, would you kill an old friend—one that has drunk with you in a dozen towns?"

"You made no secret of your intentions toward me."

"But, *amigo*, I offered to let you go free. But, see, I will speak with the others, tell what a great fighter you are, never to be taken without great loss of life, and, if they will listen, I shall lead them away."

"You mean that?"

"I swear it, señor, by my father's grave!"

"Make it your mother's; 'tis easier found. Very well." With apparent reluctance, he allowed his hand to drop from the gun. "Now, *vamos*, before I change my mind."

The man required no further caution, and, while he moved off at a hurried walk, Bill answered the girl's eager questions.

"Don't you believe that he'll take them away—at least, not till they've had another try for our scalps."

"Then wouldn't it have been better—" Vance began, but stopped dead under the other's look of quick contempt. "He carried a white flag."

Quite believing it himself, he looked on suspiciously, when, after an amount of gesticulation and fiery eloquence that would have outfitted even a Latin American congress for at least a month, the Mexicans began to pack the reassembled outfit on the mules. He was more than surprised when a second envoy approached—this time a peón, for the *charro* refused a second risk—nor did he glimpse the real reason behind the movement even when the man delivered his message.

"The *jefe* he say he will let you go free if you give up to him your cartridges and guns?"

"Give up our cartridges and guns? I'll give you—this!"

Only by a precipitate retreat did the man evade his sudden kick; and he was halfway back to his fellows before Chance divined the pure, cold impudence of the offer. In fact, the man had

mounted, and was moving off with his companions, driving the mules and spare horses before them, before the complete meaning burst upon him.

"They're clean out of cartridge—just had to go off. Thunderation! Why didn't I know it a little sooner? But they've got the legs on us now. It's good-by to the horses and outfit."

After a pause, he went on to extract such comfort as was possible from the situation:

"Well, we'd better be thankful that we were their first game. If they'd had time to sack a few haciendas and connect with some ammunition, we'd never have got off as easy as this. And it is only about eighty miles to the border."

"Eighty miles?" Both Vance and the girl exclaimed it. Vance continued alone: "Without food or horses? But surely we shall pass by some towns or farms?"

Chance shook his head.

"When the boss said for me to get you over the border, and do it quick, I naturally laid a course out in the lonely. There's Mexican towns closer, but"—he nodded at the departing revolutionists—"we can't keep too far away. No, we'll just have to hoof it out, and, as soon as those chaps get down the horizon, we'll make a start. It will be better, anyway, to travel at night—cooler and safer."

"But what about food? I'm hungry as a wolf now," Vance began complainingly, but stopped under the other's quick glance.

"Why, durned if it ain't the philosopher! Where've you been this long while? An hour ago you wasn't thinking of eating. Count yourself lucky that we're traveling on the heels of the rains, for three months later this country would have been dryer than bricks."

Dusk fell as they left the hut; but already the fat moon hung like a white shield on the dark wall of the east, and, rising while they talked, it presently flooded the whole country with tender light. Under its quiet radiance, the plains stretched around and ahead dotted with shadowy cactus, whose vegetal columns uprose like ghostly

monoliths in a spirit land. A sterile country at its best, but one removed from desert, its sparse grass still held the sand, affording good foothold, so the walking was fairly easy.

Worn as she was in nerve and body by fear and excitement on top of a day's ride, the girl yet took without complaint a pace that put fifteen miles in their rear by midnight. In fact, her performance drew Chance's admiring comment when he stopped, at last, to rest.

"Another spell like that, and we can lie down to sleep through the day."

"As far again?" She could not contain her dismay. "I'm *so* tired—and hungry."

"Here, try a chew of this." With his hunting knife, he cut a bunch of the grass he had been chewing himself all along the way. "If horses can live on it, I allow it orter help a man out."

"Why, it is sweet!" she cried, after a minute of dubious mastication. "Try it, Vance."

"Not for me."

He spoke so snappishly that Chance picked him up.

"Stomach too haughty, eh? Nothing short of porterhouse for yours?"

"Do you take me for an ox?"

"No, that ain't your species." The quiet scorn of his accent was sufficiently definitive. "Do as you like, but if the young lady takes my advice, she'll keep on grazing."

And keep on "grazing" she did. Both moving on over the shadowy plains and during spells of rest, she chewed steadily, rejecting the tough fiber after she had extracted the sweet juices, and with excellent results. When, at last, dawn broke with a sudden conflagration all along the east, and the sun burst with violence almost explosive out of crimson mists, the twenty-fifth mile was passed. Before the waxing heat compelled a halt, they had accomplished another five.

Vance had not done nearly so well. Daylight had shown him stumbling along, twenty yards in their rear, head down, loose hands swinging, and the instant they stopped he collapsed; lay with

his limbs resting just as they fell. Though the girl looked on with pale interest while Chance hacked and bent the branches of a paloverde into a shelter against the sun, Vance never once looked up.

"Leave me alone," he muttered weakly, when Chance called him to come into the shade.

Nor did he move till the insufferable sun had taken heavy toll of his failing strength. Yet, with all his exhaustion, his mulish obstinacy remained undiminished. He turned up his nose once more when Chance brought in the peeled leaves of a nopal cactus.

"I said that I was no ox."

"All right, my friend—but you'll be sorry."

And his repentance came that night. For, while there are men in whom the indomitable will drives the failing flesh on to accomplishments beyond its capacity, there are others—and Vance was of them—in whom the weak flesh rules the spirit. Though the day's long rest revived him so that he fell in behind when they moved off that evening, he gave each step grudgingly, with weak, febrile complaints, muttered curses. The friction and chafing of spirit of the first ten miles wore off the thin veneers of civilization, leaving the animal exposed beneath—the weak, degenerate animal, softened by overcare and feeding. At midnight he gave in.

"I can't go another step." He whined it as the other two rose and passed on. "I'm all in."

Though his muscles were undoubtedly less tired than those of the girl, who stood rocking on her blistered feet a few yards away, he shamelessly voiced his surrender.

"Then you'll just have to stay here," Chance quietly answered.

"You don't mean to say that you are going to desert me?" Vance shrieked it quaveringly out of his base fear.

"I don't see why not." Coming back, Chance looked contemptuously down upon him. "I reckon you're forgetting yer own philosophy. Somehow that 'struggle-for-existence' theory don't seem to appeal to you no more; but I'm

rather beginning to believe in it. If you're too weak to follow, I don't jest see how we're to gain anything by staying here to watch you die. If it wasn't for that little bag of bones there, I might have been fool enough to have tried to pack you in. But she's all that I can manage. No, if you can't make it, you'll jest have to stay. *Adios!*"

Catching up, he whispered:

"Come along, miss. He's not nearly as tired as you. He'll follow."

"Are you—sure?" She whispered it, looking doubtfully back.

"Try it. It's our only chance."

For a while it seemed as though he were mistaken, for, looking back from a hundred yards, they saw Vance still sitting, a dim, huddled shape in the soft light; nor did he move till they had passed out of his sight. Then, as he looked up and around at the stars and the moon, the ghostly cactuses sole tenants of those vast, dark spaces, he was seized with a sudden terror of loneliness. Rising hastily, he staggered after them, shrieking to stop, and when he caught up, the slow trail went as before, with him lagging a score of yards behind. Though, at each rest, the same play was enacted all through that night, he was still with them when the sun flamed up out of the east, and they camped once more for the day.

They had covered another twenty-five miles; but an equal distance still stretched between them and the nearest American border town; and, looking at the girl as she lay asleep under the brush shelter late that afternoon, Chance shook his head. Excepting grass and cactus, she had touched no food for over two days, and her blue eyepits and sunken cheeks testified to the strain. Considering that she had never walked more than a couple of miles at a time in all her life, the effort she had put forth was remarkable, and the man's murmur of sympathy bespoke his appreciation.

"Poor little devil! If he'd only the half of yer grit, we could ha' carried you in on our hands. But you ain't a-going to be tortured any more. You'll be safe enough here for another day."

Slipping quietly out, he wrote with a stick in the soft sand on the edge of the rain pool close at hand: "Stay right here till I come." Then he walked on alone, at a pace that showed his tough sinews and muscle were still unimpaired.

Just before going out of sight, he looked back with a smile of humorous contempt.

"'Struggle for existence,' says you. Poor innocents!"

"No, you ain't a-going to suffer long."

Chance repeated it walking along. But, as it was impossible for him to foresee that he would meet a party of Federals, scouting for *insurrectos*, within ten miles, he did not realize himself how quickly relief would come, that the girl would not awake till aroused by the welcome clatter of hoofs, that midnight would see them all safe in the American border town.

However, it did; and, in some seconds less than ten minutes after he had seen his charges in safe hands, Bill Chance had placed himself on the outside of three pounds of steak, net, heroic treatment that would undoubtedly have killed either of the others. But, as most of the ills of the civilized animal spring from overfeeding, their few days' abstinence did neither great harm.

Two days thereafter both were up and around, and, omitting the details of their convalescence, the story goes on upon the morning that Bill Chance escorted the girl from the hotel to the little station.

If this were romance, here would be the place to set down how each had fallen in love with the other, and the curtain would fall on a ring and a marriage. But such was not the case. If the sordid truth be told, in his inmost mind, Bill was just aching to get back to the poker game in the "Miners' Saloon"; and, if more emotional, the girl's feelings were equally disinterested.

Pacing the platform while the train took on baggage, Chance talked frontier gossip with the evident intention of staving off the thanks that loomed large in her eyes.

But they were inevitable—as the rain from thunder clouds. They broke in a burst when he asked if her tickets were all right.

"Yes, mother telegraphed us last night with some money. But I am going to leave it to my father to settle with you. Doesn't that sound absurd? As though one could ever pay for the gift of one's life. And I owe you even more—have to thank you for showing me to myself for the little pedantic fool that I am. But I have learned that knowledge should go with experience, and that humanity counts more than all. When I think of the way in which I used to talk of processes that grind human lives—"

"Makes a good deal of difference whose ox is gored, eh?"

She laughed with him.

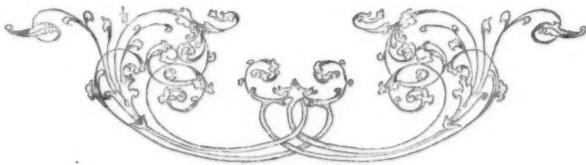
"It does; but after this I'm going to look out for the other man's."

Now, during the last week, he had watched, with curious amusement, the gradual evolution of a certain shamefacedness in Vance Leward's bearing to his old, familiar, superior superciliousness. In the last few days it seemed to Bill that this had been chastened by a touch of the glum. Moreover, instead of traveling with Marion, he had not even shown up to bid her farewell. It was to establish a surmise that Chance called to her on the platform, as the train moved away:

"You'll allow that I have earned a piece of the cake?"

And he grinned, on his way back to the saloon, at her laughing reply:

"You shall have it—some day—when I catch a *man*."



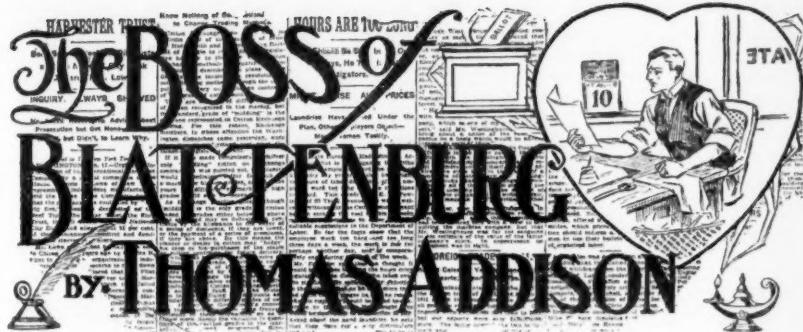
## CHOICE

**N**EW love or old? Which shall it be?  
The sum of willful witchery?  
A rose of flame, and dawn, and dew,  
With faërie whimsies glinting through?  
A creature shaped for all delight?  
A flower by day, a star by night?  
Made but to laugh, and love, and woo—  
This is the new.

Which shall it be? New love or old?  
A singing soul, a heart of gold,  
For any fate, for any need,  
An ear of kindly, pitying heed,  
A lineless brow, a rosy mouth,  
Sweet as the balms of all the South,  
A soft white hand of perfect mold—  
This is the old.

Truth must I speak, albeit loath.  
I'm single still—though I've asked both.

MARHTA McCULLOCH-WILLIAMS.



## CHAPTER I.

**T**HE old boss sat looking out over the city that for twenty years he had ruled as a prince rules his province. His office—the private office to which but a chosen few were admitted—was on the fourteenth floor of the Meridian Trust Company Building. He owned the building; he controlled the Trust Company; he owned or controlled many things with which his name was not associated.

Indeed, so frugal was Martin Brock of the employment of his name that you might search the city tax roll from top to bottom and find but an inconspicuous trace of it here and there. It appeared with no more frequency than that of any honest citizen who had spent a lifetime amassing a modest competency.

Yet Martin Brock was worth four million dollars, invested largely in Blattenburg realty. He, at least, did not share in the misguided opinion that one's wife's relatives, and even one's own, are unmitigated evils.

Brock was waiting for Jim Hanford, whom he had summoned to a conference. Hanford was a lawyer with a large practice, though he was still under forty. He moved in a rather good circle, was a member of the Business Men's Club, and belonged to the Society for Civic Improvement. But he owed his rise to Brock, and was the latter's very faithful, able, wily servant.

A good many men in Blattenburg

owed their rise to Brock—bankers, merchants, manufacturers, professional men. It paid to serve him. He had ways for helping friends. The mayor and city council, the municipal judges, the city solicitor, the fire commissioner—all, or nearly all, were Brock's.

All these men paid tribute to the old boss, were anxious to stand high in his favor. They knew him; knew that when he promised a thing he "made good"; knew that within his own code of ethics he was "square." It was the secret of his power. He stood by those who stood by him. If he got you into trouble he would get you out. In fine, you could count on Brock if you did his will. And conversely, woe betide him who opposed that will—punishment was certain, if at times delayed.

There was nothing personally lovable about the boss of Blattenburg. He was a big man with a prognathous jaw, heavy shoulders, and thick neck. His mouth was a straight, thin line under a gray mustache. His eyes were a cold, watery blue, and his large, fleshy nose had a way of twitching visibly when he was annoyed or aroused. He was a fighter—swift, sure, merciless. When he struck, it was to main, to put you down and out. And he rarely missed his aim, as a good many political wrecks drifting around the State could testify.

Brock had started life as a barkeeper—rough, uncouth, illiterate. But he had genius for organization, wonderful executive ability, and the patience of an Indian. Born under another star, he

might have been a great general, a merchant prince, or a trust pirate. As it was, he simply "ran" a city of three hundred and fifty thousand souls, and occasionally reached out to Grafton, the capital, and gave the plum tree there a pretty shaking.

In the years of his growth in power, Brock had shed his primal crudities of manner. He had schooled himself to careful converse and quiet demeanor. He now dressed soberly, and could talk for minutes at a stretch without seriously fracturing any of the parts of speech. Yet, if necessity arose, he could still roughneck it—despite his fifty odd years—with any ward healer in the city.

This, then, was the man who sat looking out over his principality, one fair morning in June, while he waited for his aid to come to him—a man who had never held an office, and was yet so feared that, in the State campaign of the year before, the president of the United States had deemed it expedient to send a member of his cabinet to Blatenburg to cry him down.

When Hanford came in, Brock motioned him to a seat by the window, and went on silently dry-smoking the little, black cigar that was seldom out of his mouth.

Like the small boy who has learned not to speak until spoken to, Hanford kept his tongue between his teeth. But he wondered what was coming.

"You heard about Bill Gordon, of course—had a stroke at the breakfast table?"

Brock put the question suddenly, without turning his head. His eyes were on the hilltops to the north of the city, where the favored residential section lay.

"Yes," answered Hanford. "Too bad. Gordon was a good fellow. Is he going to pull through?"

"No," said the other slowly. "His ticket's bought. I've seen 'em go like him before—last a week or a month, maybe, then quit in a hurry."

"Um!" grunted the lawyer, to whom—unless of a strictly testamentary nature—all talk of death was a dismal

superfluity. Then: "What about the *Tribune*? Who is going to run it?"

The old boss slewed around in his chair till he faced the speaker.

"The paper will go to the boy. Do you happen to know him?"

"Joe Gordon? Yes, I know him—in a way. Hasn't been around here much till lately. Been abroad—doing all the stunts cut out for rich men's sons."

Hanford paused to light a cigar, the while leaning back lazily in his chair.

Brock's nose twitched slightly.

"Tell me," he commanded, "all you know about this young feller—everything."

Hanford sat up with celerity. When the boss used that tone he meant business.

"He's twenty-eight. Harvard man. Has never done a lick of work of any kind. Loafed around New York—London—Paris—all the other hot spots in the crust. He came home about three months ago. I've met him once or twice at the club, and—well, I guess that's about all."

"The hell it is!" snapped Brock. "You haven't told me anything. I want to know what this young buck looks like; what he says, and what he does; whether he's just the usual damn fool or has got brains in his bean. D'ye know anything about this, Jim?"

"Why, answering you categorically, Martin," said the lawyer appealingly, "he's a rather husky chap. Six-footer, with a square face and steady eye—gray, I think. He walks into a room full of men in a cheeky sort of way, like he owned all present. Don't seem to have much to say—just looks on at things as if it bored him, but he had to stand it. These days he's out at the country club most of the time, so I hear. Goes in for golf, polo, aviation—all the other brain-building pursuits of the idle rich. Just the man—I don't think—to run the *Tribune*."

Hanford laughed derisively, and bent himself to the task of reviving his languishing cigar.

Brock was studying the information given him, turning it over in his mind and viewing it from all sides. He did

not seem to find the fun in it that Hanford found. Presently he looked up, and shot out a short, sharp question:

"Who's the girl?"

The lawyer's perplexity was genuine. "I don't think I get you," he said. Brock scowled.

"Yes, you do. Every man has got his woman. So's young Gordon. Who is she?"

"Oh! Well, I've heard say it's Bessie Comerford. Anyway, I've seen her with him quite often."

"You mean Henry Comerford, of the Ninth National—his daughter?"

"Yes. Somebody told me—I don't know how true it is—that they were engaged once, just after Joe came out of college. She broke it off, and he went away; but he's back again, and barking up the same tree, it seems."

Something like a spark flashed in Martin Brock's cold blue eyes, and then was gone. His manner suddenly changed.

"Jim," he said pleasantly, "I asked you to come over here to take a message from me to Waldron. Give him to understand he's to keep things running on the *Tribune* just the same as ever. He's managing editor, and till Bill Gordon croaks he's boss. Tell him no matter what happens later—if anything does—I'll see that he lands on his feet!"

Brock got up and went over to his desk at the other side of the room. It was the well-known cue that an interview was ended, and Hanford took it. But at the door he paused.

"Martin," he ventured, "I was down by the new grade crossing at the Union Station yesterday, and"—he hesitated a little—"well, I'm no engineer, but I want to say to you that there's too much sand going into those concrete retaining walls."

"Well?" queried Brock coldly.

"Well," proceeded Hanford, accepting the challenge, "if I can see it, somebody else can. And if it gets noised around, the first thing you know you'll have one peach of a row on your hands."

"Who'll make it?" came the Gatling-like demand.

"The press—even the *Tribune*, by George! It would have to speak out to save its face. The roar would be something awful. No paper could sit still and do nothing. 'Pon my word, Martin, you ought to tip it off to Burton & Bailey, the contractors, to go slow. They can't expect to milk a half-a-million-dollar job like this to the limit. That viaduct's a public-safety measure."

Brock looked at Hanford a moment. He saw that the man was really stirred—actually in fear that the lives of travelers might be placed in jeopardy. And, somehow, he did not like the idea himself. So he said quietly:

"You're right, Jim. I'll see to it at once. Good day."

When Hanford had gone, Brock got Comerford on the phone.

"Henry," he called, "how much sand is going into that G. C. job?"

"What we agreed on," was the answer.

"Well," replied the boss, "I'm afraid it's too strong. Better cut it down a little before somebody gets next."

The man at the other end of the wire entered a protest against this—emphatic, it would seem, for Brock said grimly:

"Have it your own way, Henry, but if anything happens, you'll have to take your medicine. A holler won't help."

He rang off, and was turning from his desk, when the office door was unceremoniously flung open, and a woman walked in—the only person in Blattenburg who would have dared thus to approach the boss. It was his wife.

Under ordinary circumstances even Mrs. Brock would have more discreetly announced her presence; in fact, this was but the second or third time in twenty years that she had set foot in her husband's office. She knew him too well to bring any flavor of the home into his business life.

Brock saw she was in a state of some excitement, and the frown that had greeted her abrupt entrance left his face.

"What's up, Nellie?" he questioned mildly.

"Gordon's dead!"

Brock flinched a little—as will any

man who has such fatal news shot at him.

"He died twenty minutes ago," added his wife. "I got it from Doc Hayes himself."

She walked with Brock to the window, and they stood there looking out. Mrs. Brock was a big, faded blonde, stout and stertorous. She was over-dressed in the latest fashion, and wore diamonds the size of bullets in her large, red ears. She had come along with Brock from his barkeeping days—though far behind him—and it was the one gold-fine streak in the man's alloy that he was not ashamed of her, nor had ever ceased in his devotion to her.

"Well," said Brock at length, "tell me all about it, Nell. When did you see Hayes?"

Mrs. Brock sat down, breathing heavily. She was afflicted with asthma, and excitement did not help it.

"Why," she began laboredly, laying a ring-laden hand on an ample bosom, "I went to Hayes' office—my old trouble—an' found he was 'round to the Gordons'. So on the chance of meetin' him, I drove round that way. Sure 'nough, I seen him comin' down the steps, an' hailed him. He said it was all over with Gordon—just cashed in."

She paused to catch her breath. Brock knew that it was not Gordon's death only that had brought her there. But he also knew, from long experience, that to get quick information from Nellie, it was best to let her give it out in her own exclusive way. So he simply said encouragingly:

"Well?"

"Well," pursued the lady, "I ast Hayes to get into the car with me, 'cause I wanted him to dope out somethin' for myself. I—I'm pretty bad to-day, Mart."

"Yes—I see," said Brock patiently. "Well?"

"Well, we drove 'round through the park an' come out on Guildford Avenue, an', after Hayes got done handin' out the dope for me, he turns to me, an' says——"

Here Mrs. Brock was seized with a wheezing spell that cruelly cut short

her flow of speech. Brock reached over and patted her sympathetically on the shoulder, and waited—chewing always on the little, black cigar.

"Where was I?" inquired Mrs. Brock presently, when the spell had left her. "Oh, yes. Hayes, he leans over to me, an' says: 'Tell the boss I heard this mornin' that the Ellis bunch is plannin' to buy in the *Trib.* He'll know what to do,' he says—or words to that effect. Then I let Hayes out—his car was fol-lerin'—an' come on here."

She was looking now—very straight—at Brock. The shadow of an amused smile flickered in his eyes, but he shook his head in answer to her mute inquiry.

"I can't do it," he said.

Then Mrs. Brock showed who was the real boss of Blattenburg.

"Sit down, Mart," she commanded.

He did so.

"Now," she announced, "you're going to buy that paper, if it takes a million."

Brock still shook his head.

"You're goin' to buy it," calmly continued his wife, "'cause I got a use for it."

Brock, in real surprise, withdrew his eyes from the outdoor view, and fixed them on the companion of his joys.

"The hell you say!" was his brief comment on the ultimatum.

But the tone was not lacking in endearment. Brock, at times, used words before his wife that would have made another woman shudder. They made her smile, for she knew how he meant them. And—though deplorable to record—on occasion Mrs. Brock herself had been known to borrow a bit here and there from her husband's vocabulary.

"Yes, Mart," she now proceeded, "I got a use for that old rag. I'll make a club of it to swat a bunch of them gran' dames up on the hills. I'll hit 'em a few on the place where the false hair grows, an' don't you forget it, Mart."

"She means it!" ejaculated the boss admiringly.

"Mean it!" echoed the lady ironically. "Oh, no, I don't mean it, Mart! I don't think about the way those old sisters up

there fling the hooks into me—how they don't never see me when I pass 'em in the park—how they look right by me, or through me, when I meet 'em at the the'ter—how you'd think I was the dirt under foot when I run across 'em in the street, an' the stores, an'—an' in the churches. Oh, I don't think about that—I don't want to get even—oh, no!"

Brock suddenly bit his cigar in two. He threw the ends out the window, and took another from his pocket.

"Well, how can you fix 'em if I buy the *Trib*? I don't quite get you, Nell."

Mrs. Brock made no immediate answer. She was struggling to suppress another wheezing spell. As the old boss looked at her, he all but bit the fresh cigar in two. No social ambition had ever marred his dreams; but he knew how Nellie felt. With all his money back of her, she could get nowhere; and neither he, astute as he was, nor she, dense as she was, could see the reason for it. Money meant power. It moved the world. It could buy anything—but just this. What the devil was the hitch here? He was willing to spend a million—two of them—to find out. Anything to please Nellie.

"An'," went on Mrs. Brock, all at once, as if no interruption had occurred, "the first dame I'm goin' to put a crimp in is Mrs. William Gordon—just as soon as it's decent to hand her one."

Her husband looked at her curiously.

"You forget, Nell," he said quietly, "that Bill Gordon stood pretty close to me."

"That's just what I don't forget!" flashed back the other. "You made Gordon—made a mint of money for him. Don't you suppose I know that, Mart? An' here she's tryin' to queen it over me as if she'd inherited it all from her Heavenly Father. Huh!"

"Well, suppose I could get the paper—which is doubtful—how would you do that little job of clubbing?"

"How? I'd get one of them society editors from Chicago, an' sic her onto the tabbies. The mistakes that would sneak into the news, Martin, would make a cow laugh. We'd spell their names wrong, an' leave out the middle

ones—that always hurts like the devil. An' we'd put the wrong dresses on the right ones, an' the right dresses on the wrong ones; an' mix up their teas, an' ball up their dances, an' give away their losses at bridge, an' who cheated, an' who welshed, an' who lied to their husbands. An' we'd pair off Mrs. B. with Mr. J. an' Mr. B. with Mrs. K., an' be tellin' the God's truth at that. Oh, we'd show 'em up proper, Mart—all their bickerin's, an' backbitin's, an' squabblin's, an' dirty doin's to the limit. An' we'd slip it over on 'em like grease; just as innocent, an' natural, an' sorrowful for mistakes as if we didn't know beef from bull's foot."

She paused, fighting for the breath she had so prodigally expended; and, before going off into a fit of coughing, managed to choke out:

"I'll pay—her—that Chicago woman—a thousand a week—to trim those cats—right!"

Brock watched her, and patted her shoulder, as she struggled with her malady; and when the seizure had spent itself, said, with one of his grim little laughs:

"It's been so quiet around here, Nell, that I guess a bunch of fireworks like you want to touch off might liven things up a little. But first I've got a hunch to buy a house up in the Klondike. I've heard that's a fine place to cool off at."

Mrs. Brock stood up suddenly.

"You mean you ain't goin' to buy the *Trib*?" she demanded ominously.

"I mean," said Brock, "that I'll buy it if I can; but you understand, old girl, I'm not to be known in it. Keep that under your hat."

"An' you'll let my woman run the society end?"

Martin Brock's cold eyes warmed with a gleam of mirth.

"Yes," he answered. "If she can stand it, I can."

Whereupon Mrs. Brock, perceiving but the surface value of the words, placed a moist kiss upon her husband's cheek. And—strange to say, after so many years of kissing—the old boss seemed to like it.

## CHAPTER II.

It was the second week following William Gordon's funeral. That public-spirited citizen had been laid to rest with eulogies from press and pulpit. It is true, the *Times*, the morning rival of the *Tribune*, and a little, irresponsible afternoon sheet, the *Telegram*, had been perhaps a trifle conservative in their meeds of praise; but, on the whole, Gordon had been sped to whatever bourne he was ticketed to with a charitable disregard of his shortcomings. It is one of the lovable traits of our common brotherhood that we refuse to speak ill of the dead—until they are good and cold.

Young Gordon had been asked so often in the last few days what he was going to do with the *Tribune* that the thing really began to annoy him. Even the iceman had had something to say about it; and the postman. Harmon Ellis, perennial aspirant for gubernatorial honors, had gone so far as to call him up on the phone—before he was out of bed, by Jove!—and request an early interview to discuss a proposition to sell the paper. And now, to-night, while peacefully eating his dinner, a telegram had been poked at him from some chap in Chicago demanding an upset price on the property at a thousand dollar option for twenty-four hours!

It was positively vexatious, and the more so because Gordon could not talk the matter over with his mother. She had no head for business; and, anyway, would never think of disagreeing with him on any stand he might take.

So he put on his hat and went over to see Bess Comerford. She, he knew, would be outspoken. It was not in her to keep back anything she thought. At least, that was what he thought—and who better fitted to judge the ways of woman than a worldly-wise man of twenty-eight?

"Well," demanded Miss Comerford, as soon as they found themselves alone on the porch, "what are you going to do with the *Tribune*, Joe?"

Joe moaned.

"Why couldn't you have let me bring

that up myself?" he inquired plaintively. "I came over on purpose to talk with you about it, but you're like all the rest."

And then he related his recent experiences. The girl laughed—the little, throaty laugh that always added speed to Gordon's pulse, and said:

"Joe, you've come to the crossing of the roads. You've got to make your choice. Only"—and her voice grew grave—"if you go on as you've been doing, you'll come out into a dreary plain, and wander around in a dreary circle until you drop from dreary weariness. Anything, Joe, but that!"

Under the mellow porch light she looked exceeding fair. She was leaning forward slightly, lips parted, dark eyes gleaming, a faint flush stealing up from cheek to brow. And the fragrance of her—or was it a breath from the rose walk yonder?—went suddenly to Gordon's head. But with the wisdom of past experience he held himself in check, and languidly lighted a cigar.

"Of course," he admitted presently, "I've got to do something—or make a bluff at doing it—now that I'm the head of the family. Everybody seems to expect it, and it would be cruel to disappoint 'em. The deuce of it is, Bess, I don't feel equal to it."

"Equal to what?"

"Doing anything special. I—I'm not used to it. It might be bad for my heart, or my digestion, or something else. You know what I mean—the things in you the doctors like to tinker with."

He grinned amiably across at his companion. It brought an answering smile. One had to be very serious indeed to withstand the infectious quality of Joseph Gordon's grin.

"I'm glad to see you don't let responsibility weigh upon you," said the young lady, with open irony. "I was afraid it might. In fact, I thought you really would want to carry on your father's work. But, come to think of it, that would require brains; wouldn't it?"

"A few," returned the other composedly, "and my assortment isn't large. I might make a hit following the plow, or running a thrashing machine; but to

buck up against the mighty lever that moves the world, well"—blowing one ring of smoke through another—"it gives me a pain in the head to think of it."

Miss Comerford made a movement of impatience.

"It is really wonderful," she observed, "that you have so long refrained from farming. I suppose, though, work of any kind would interfere with your more serious pursuits."

"Precisely," agreed Mr. Gordon. "Your discernment, Bess, is flawless. It has revealed to me the necessity of selling the *Trib.* I cannot let anything stand in the way of my career."

The girl's mood changed abruptly. She bent over and laid her hand on the arm of Gordon's chair, and when she spoke it was in a little, breathless sort of way.

"Joe, let us drop this farce. I've got to say something to you, something I've been thinking of ever since—since your father died. I've been waiting for this moment, waiting for you to come to me and talk about your plans. I—all your friends are expecting great things of you, Joe. We've made allowances for you up to now; but now, Joe, now you've got to make good or you'll be discredited forever. Can't you see it?"

He made no reply, and she went on hurriedly, in the same eager, breathless little way:

"Joe, boy, your friends all love you, they know you are true, and clean, and fine; but they want a chance to be proud of you, to look up to you, to feel that you stand for things worth while, things that make life worth the living—strength of purpose, strength of deeds. You've got to give your friends this chance, Joe. You owe it to yourself, to the memory of your father."

She paused, seemingly strangely moved, and, leaning back in her chair, waited for his answer.

"You mean," said Gordon slowly, "that I ought to take hold of the *Tribune* and run it myself?"

"Yes. You are equipped for it in every way."

The young man smiled.

"Except," he remarked, "in the unimportant detail of experience."

"You can acquire that," she came back instantly. "And, besides, you won't have to write things yourself—unless you want to. It's the policy of the paper you'll have charge of."

"Oh, the policy of the paper! And will you please tell me, Bess, what the policy should be?"

"Yes, I will tell you, Joe. It doesn't require the wisdom of Solomon for that. It should be the same policy that one ought to follow in his private life—be clean, be honorable, and tell the truth without fear or favor."

"That sounds reasonable," said Gordon, "if you shut your eyes to the business end of it. Unfortunately, I've knocked around the old plant enough to learn that advertisers—and others—are so sensitive to the truth that sometimes it makes 'em cry when you tell it. And that gives the bookkeeper a lot of trouble, and harries the 'old man,' as they affectionately call the owner, until he can't eat his supper for worrying where his breakfast is to come from."

"Yes," spoke up the girl quickly, "but you don't have to worry about the money end of it. You can afford to tell the truth, no matter whom it hurts."

"For a brief period—yes. Afterward—well, there's that farm job, you know."

"Joe!"

Again Bess leaned over, and placed her hand upon his chair. Gordon looked at the little thing lying there—white, and soft, and slender—and longed to take it in his own. But, in spite of the pose it was his pleasure to assume, this young man was of a nimble mind under sure control, and he knew that his hour had not yet come. And so, saying nothing, he waited for the girl to go on.

"Joe, I am very much in earnest," she said, in low, vibrant tones. "We've been friends a long time, you and I. I can't bear the thought that our friendship must cease; as it must, Joe, if you fail now to rise to your opportunity. I would lose respect for you. Joe—I would scorn you!"

"I believe you would." The words

were uttered quite seriously; with, indeed, the force of conviction.

Miss Comerford studied his face for a moment. Then she said:

"Will you let me tell you, Joe, how I would run the *Tribune* if I were a man? I have thought of it a great deal."

"I would be glad to know," was the grave response.

She settled back in her chair, her hands lying loosely in her lap, and gazed out into the shadowy recesses of the lawn with unseeing eyes.

"I would hang upon my office wall," she said, "these three words: 'Tell The Truth.' It should be the motto for my staff. I would tell the news as it was, without bias or prejudice—fearlessly. Every one should have a square deal. I would defend the weak against oppression, and I would shield the strong from imposition. I would be generous where I could, but just always. I would correct abuses and promote good works. And I would lend a helping hand to every sane, righteous cause that came my way."

Gordon's lips twitched a little.

"But, my dear girl, how about politics? That's the breath of life to every newspaper. How about the grafting that's going on here in our beloved burg a hundred and sixty-eight hours a week?"

"I don't know anything about politics," returned the other, with kindling eyes, "but this I do know, Joe. If the *Tribune* were mine, I'd expose corruption wherever I found it, high or low, in any party. I wouldn't be the tool of any man, or set of men. I'd make my paper a whip to flog the back of every office holder unfaithful to his trust. And I'd pillory every citizen caught in dishonest acts. I wouldn't let him hide behind his family connections. Rather should the innocent suffer shame than a rogue go unpunished. Why—Joe—if my own father should suddenly turn thief, I would expose him as relentlessly as I would an utter stranger! And I would want you to do the same."

Gordon wisely held his peace; but the fervor of the girl had set his blood to coursing a little faster.

"And so, Joe," she ended, "you are going to keep the *Tribune*, and you are going to make it an agency for good in this city such as it has never known before. And, Joe, I—we—shall be so proud of you that—oh, it will *hurt!*"

There was a catch in her voice—it sounded almost like a sob—as she drew herself up, and, with hands tight-clasped against her breast, looked at the man before her.

Away down in himself, Gordon felt strange forces stirring, new motives forming—a quick, fierce ambition. And coming swiftly upon this was born the sense of power, the desire of conquest. It took possession of him, and thrilled him mightily. When he spoke, there must have been some hint of this regeneration in his voice, something that the girl, too, felt, though his words were few.

"Yes," he said. "I will run the *Tribune*."

"Oh!" she cried joyfully. "And you're going to do it because you feel you should, because it is the one big thing to do!"

"Yes, and because you have showed me the way, Bess."

Gordon reached over, and found her hand; but she stood up in a rush of disappointment—deep and keen.

"Don't!" said the young man, rising with her. "It is only good night, my friend. I have not forgotten our parting, years ago, and what you said. When I have earned the right to do it, then I shall come and claim—this."

He laid his other hand over hers, and for a moment's space they stood silently eye to eye. Then Gordon turned, and went his way.

### CHAPTER III.

Gordon walked into the *Tribune* office at noon the next day, and casually announced that he had come to take charge of the paper. Upstairs and downstairs it was regarded as a huge joke—to be carefully concealed, however, in the proprietor's presence.

A little later in the day a man arrived with a neatly framed three-foot placard,

which he proceeded to hang up directly under the big wall clock in the city room. Everybody grinned when they read it—even Smith, the cub reporter, who in his brief career had learned that the truth as printed often bears but faint resemblance to the truth as told.

Waldron's grin was a dry one, however. The managing editor sensed trouble ahead.

At five o'clock that afternoon Gordon called the staff together, and outlined his policy to it. He spoke easily, confidently, discounting criticism in advance by confessing his lack of practical experience.

"But," he concluded, "a policy is something any intelligent man can construct. If he can't carry it into working effect himself, he can get others to do it for him while he supervises the job. This, gentlemen, is the way I am fixed. I don't want a man to stay on here who is not in accord with me, for"—he rested significantly on the word—"I'm playing no joke on you. I mean business."

He looked around, and saw he had made the impression he sought. And he also saw that Waldron, on some pretext, had slipped away.

"The question is," added the new "old man" quietly: "Are you with me?"

"To the limit!" came back the answering chorus, with City Editor McArthur as precentor.

When Gordon had gone, Lew Hill, the city-hall man, made oracular utterance.

"In just about two days," he remarked, "if this isn't the hottest old news shop this side of Hades, I'll eat my string next pay day."

The cub reporter laughed joyously. He had the beginnings of a good story up his sleeve—about the new grade crossing. Only yesterday it had been tipped off to him; but, when he went to Waldron with it, that arbiter of his destiny had told him sharply he was hunting moonshine, and to go out and chase real news. Well, he—the cub—would show the managing editor a trick or two. He would go out and dig up that crossing story from A to Izzard,

write the truth about it, and sneak it in on Gordon's desk. Then he would see what happened!

And so young Smith, little knowing what mischief his humble pen would work, set forth upon his self-allotted assignment.

Gordon had taken possession of the room that had been his father's private office. It was on the ground floor just off the street entrance. A door opened into it from the public rotunda, and another door opened out of it into the space behind the counter. The cashier's cage and the bookkeeper's desk were at the other end of the rotunda, facing the street.

The windowpanes of the snug retreat up front were frosted, and the walls were deadened. Even the pneumatic proof carrier running to the floors above was shut off by a sliding panel. The former occupant evidently had believed that a private office was intended to insure privacy.

After his talk in the city room, Gordon had requested Waldron to come downstairs with him. As soon as the door of the private office closed on them, he turned sharply to the managing editor:

"You don't like the stand I've taken, Waldron, do you?"

"To be frank with you—no," said the other, slumping down into a chair.

"Why? Spit it out. No beating around the bush."

"You're too radical; you'll turn everything upside down, have a hornet's nest around your ears, make a hundred enemies to one friend, throw your money to the birds, and have to knuckle under when all is said and done."

"So that's what I'll get for telling the truth—fair, square facts?"

"Yes, and you'll get it quick. Why, every one of those fellows upstairs has a yarn to spin—about something or somebody. They're at it now. You gave them the word. If you print the stuff, your front page to-morrow will be so yellow it'll make an orange look like a snowball."

Gordon sat toying with the paper knife that used to be his father's. The

sight seemed to give the other man sudden inspiration.

"Look here, Joe," he went on, reaching over and tapping him on the arm. "I have been with the *Trib* ten years. Your father trusted me. I've been right here in this room many a time at conferences with—with the leading men of the city. You're on the wrong tack, Joe. You're going dead against your father's policy. You're—"

"What!" Young Gordon whirled around upon the speaker. "Do you mean to tell me, Waldron, that my father's policy was not to tell the truth?"

The managing editor smiled—a non-committal smile that could be interpreted as one might choose.

"You're rather quick on the trigger, Joe," he protested. "I meant your father was diplomatic. He caught his flies with honey; not with vinegar, as you're trying to do. And see what he did for the *Trib!* He made it a power. Why"—he looked furtively at the young man—"I could get you two hundred thousand for it, cold cash, to-morrow."

"It's not for sale," said Gordon shortly. "And furthermore, Waldron, what I said upstairs goes. I'll print the stuff the boys write, if it has news value and is true. Don't cut a word of it without consulting me; and see, please, that I have proofs of everything."

Waldron rose.

"I guess I'm no longer needed here," he remarked dispassionately. "I don't seem to fit in. So, Mr. Gordon, you can consider my resig—"

"Hold on, Jack!" broke in with his infectious grin the new editor-in-chief. "I'm not considering resignations at present. You go and take a two weeks' vacation; go fishing while I go trouble-hunting. But be sure and leave your address, old man, because"—he laughed lightly—"I may need you back here before you get a bite. Good night, and just ask McArthur to come down, will you?"

#### CHAPTER IV.

When the *Tribune* came out next morning people rubbed their eyes. They had to look twice to make sure it was

the same old sheet. Half a dozen stories were played up strong on the front page, and there were others on the inside pages.

It is not the province of this tale to go into minute particulars of the upheaval caused by the first issue of the *Tribune* under its new management. Suffice it to say that to a score of more or less prominent citizens breakfast that day was a superfluity. They had no taste for it. They were in a hurry to get downtown. Telephones started ringing long before the usual hour. Hurred consultations were held throughout officialdom, and in private business offices with underground connections. Confidential messengers raced to and fro. Special-delivery letters were dispatched. Telegrams flew to all points of the compass. Press wires everywhere sizzled with the news.

In short, there was the devil to pay in Blattenburg hours before the calm-eyed author of it all had emerged from his matutinal bath.

Meanwhile, Waldron was closeted with Martin Brock up in the Meridian Trust Building. Brock had been one of the recipients of the *Tribune's* attentions. He received his in the form of a double-column, double-leaded editorial that old Crocker, the leader writer, had kept bottled up in his system for a long, long time. What it left unsaid about the boss was a negligible quantity. It was written in primer English; a dunce could understand it; and it had actually wormed its way under Brock's seasoned hide.

"I did my best with the young fool," Waldron was saying; "but I knew it was no use from the start. The only thing to do now is to shut off his wind. The boys on the staff know it can't last, of course, and so they're trying to unload the accumulation of years in an hour. To-morrow's paper will be one big yell!"

Brock, savagely chewing on his eternal cigar, said nothing. He was looking over at the hilltops, his eyes narrowed to mere slits, his nose twitching steadily.

"He told me to take a vacation—go fishing," went on Waldron, with a sar-

donic laugh. "But I guess I won't pack my grip to-day. I—"

"You stay at home!" spat out the boss suddenly. "You prowl around that office—getting ready to go, understand?—and pick up what you can. Get proof sheets of the big features for to-morrow, and bring 'em to me at my house to-night at eight o'clock. I'll fix him so he won't let out another squeal!"

He got up and crossed over to his desk, and, when Waldron had gone, called up the *Times'* business manager.

"Roberts," he said, "I want you to send to my house at three o'clock the safest man you've got who can write red-hot stuff. There's a hundred dollars in it for him, and you get the story if I decide to print it. In any case, I'm owing you—understand? That's all."

There was a gentle tap on the door, and Brock let Harmon Ellis into the room. It was the fourth or fifth secret conference that imposing gentleman had held with the boss of Blattenburg in the past ten days.

About the same time, Mr. Joseph Gordon, carefully groomed and of tranquil mind, set out to walk downtown to his office. He had put his paper to bed the night before, and felt the need of physical exercise. His chosen way led him by the Comerfords—as somehow it usually did—and he was not overwhelmingly surprised to see Miss Comerford sitting on the wide, cool porch. When he drew near, she signaled to him to come in.

As Gordon mounted the steps, he noticed the girl's face was white and her lips were tremulous.

"Joe—Joe!" she exclaimed, and paused with her hand to her throat, as if she were suffocating.

"Good heavens, Bess, what has happened?" demanded Gordon, really startled.

"I have read the paper—every word of it—and, oh, Joe, it is dreadful!"

Assured that no calamity had befallen his friend, the young man smiled upon her amiably.

"It seems that I've made quite a hit," he remarked, with becoming modesty. "My telephone has been ringing like

mad all the morning, but I haven't answered it. Told the man to tell every one I transact business only at the office."

"But, Joe," gasped the girl, "father says you've turned the town upside down. I've never seen him in such a rage. I can't understand it. He—he said you ought to be gagged and shut up somewhere. He called you a muckraker, and—and—oh, Joe—a dangerous anarchist! And he went off saying something would have to be done to suppress you."

Joe grinned.

"It seems the truth is a terrible weapon, doesn't it?—a regular sandbag. But I don't see what call your father has to make such a holler, if you'll excuse the expression, Bess. Nothing was said about him. It's only the rascals we are getting after, driving the money changers out of the temple, you know. And we haven't got started yet. Just wait a day or two."

Bess Comerford clasped her hands nervously before her.

"I—I didn't dream there was so much rottenness in any city," she declared. "Why, Joe, two of the men you've exposed to-day are—are members of our church!"

Gordon's grin widened.

"Yes? Well, you're lucky, Bess, not to find the preacher among 'em. Perhaps you may to-morrow. I don't know what stuff the boys are getting up to-day—but if it's the truth, I'm going to run it."

His jaw hardened, and into his gray eyes came the fire of a set resolve.

"This is a rotten town," he said slowly, "rotten—politically—to the core. I'm going to do my little best to clean it up. I've hung your motto on my wall, Bess, and I've made your policy mine. I am going to tell the news straight, without bias or prejudice. And I'll spare no man I find to be a rogue."

He took her hand, and held it tightly in his own.

"Joe," she whispered, "I almost wish I hadn't urged you so. I—I am afraid—I don't know what of—but I'm afraid—afraid!"

With a sudden movement she freed her hand, and, turning, ran into the house.

When Gordon reached the office, he found a pile of telegrams on his desk—messages breathing censure, praise, threats, encouragement. Among them was another dispatch from the Chicago man. It read :

Give you three hundred thousand, spot cash. James Hanford, attorney, empowered to act for me.

Gordon tossed the yellow sheet aside, and turned to meet the bookkeeper, who had rapped and been told to enter.

"We've had a thousand dollars' worth of ads withdrawn this morning," he announced funereally, "and notice of cancellation when contracts expire of seven thousand more."

"All right, Jones," returned the proprietor cheerfully. "That'll give us more space for news. And I say, old man, just don't bother me with these details till the end of the month, will you? Shut the door, please."

Gordon's telephone rang. When he answered it, a man at the other end, forgetting to announce his name, began to pour forth his views of the *Tribune*, and all appertaining thereto, with a whole-heartedness worthy of higher inspiration.

Gordon cut him off in mid-career, and, calmly twisting the receiver loose from the wires, threw it on the floor. Then he arose, and went upstairs to the editorial rooms.

The place was humming with activity. Typewriters were going as if they were wound up and couldn't stop. Everybody, though, found time to grin when Gordon entered—everybody except young Smith, who had not been seen since five o'clock of the day before.

Gordon grinned back at the boys, and captured them, one and all. And when, glancing at the placard under the clock, he laughed aloud, they became his slaves. Some wag had pinned a pendant to the frame. The motto now read :

**TELL THE TRUTH  
AND DAMN THE EXPENSE.**

City Editor McArthur, who for the present had also taken on the duties of managing editor, looked up from a pile of copy as Gordon came into his room. He had gone to high school with his new boss.

"Pretty warm stuff, Joe," he grunted, patting the wads of paper. "I've sent out for a cake of ice to lay my head on now and then."

"Just one word, Mac," said Gordon, with sudden gravity. "Be sure it's the truth."

"Oh, it's gospel, all right. I know the facts. Every newspaper man knows 'em. But how about the libel suits?"

"We'll tackle them as they come along. We won't borrow from to-morrow trouble for to-day. I'm leaving this whole thing up to you, Mac. Hit every head that needs hitting, no matter whose it is. But remember—nothing goes without my O. K."

"Sure thing," said McArthur, bending to his task again.

Gordon turned away; but, before he had reached the door, the city editor looked up again.

"Oh, say," he called. "Waldron was in a little while ago. Says he won't get off till to-morrow. Got some odd chores to clean up here first."

Gordon nodded, and went out. When, a few moments later, he returned to his office, he found Harmon Ellis waiting at the door—frock-coated, silk-hatted, and resplendent generally.

"Mr. Gordon," he began, with one of his well-practiced public bows, "I wish but a moment of your valuable time. May I——"

He paused, with an eloquent gesture toward the closed door. Gordon smiled, and opened it.

"Walk in," he said; "but I'll have to ask you to be really brief, Mr. Ellis."

"Certainly—certainly," responded the perennial candidate. "I realize that you must have many—ah—weighty matters to engage your attention."

"Yes," said Gordon soberly, and glancing at his watch. "I'm due now at the Country Club. Lunch and golf with Buck Harrison. But he'll wait for me."

"Good gad!" was the involuntary tribute paid by Mr. Ellis to this important piece of news.

"I suppose," went on Gordon placidly, "you want to make me another proposal for the paper. It seems I'm unable to make my position in this matter clear; my negatives lack force. But, at the risk of being tedious, I'll say again: *No, the Tribune is not for sale. No—not!*"

"Quite so—I understand you perfectly, Mr. Gordon. But—and this is my errand—if you should change your mind at any time, may I consider that I have first option? Your word is sufficient."

"Oh, if that's all you want—sure," agreed Gordon, reaching for his hat.

"I am prepared," added Ellis as they moved to the door, "to pay you three hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars for the property. And," he wound up with explosive energy, "let me tell you, sir, it's a devilish good price!"

"Splendid," assented Gordon, closing the door behind them. "If I had that much money all at once, I could start another paper."

At two o'clock that afternoon the cub reporter showed up. He was posted. He knew McArthur was in charge and his story would get a hearing.

"Give me the facts—straight—quick!" said the city editor when Smith had made his preface.

The boy was prepared. He had studied out every move in advance. He intended that this day should witness his farewell to cubdom.

"That grade crossing," he began right off the reel, "is a six-hundred-thousand-dollar job. The State pays twenty-five per cent of it, the city ten per cent, and the B. & L. sixty-five per cent. All three are being robbed. French & Platt were the lowest bidders on the job—five hundred and forty-five thousand dollars. The contract went to Burton & Bailey at six hundred thousand dollars. There's fifty-five thousand dollars stolen with a pen stroke."

"Umph!" grumbled McArthur. "That's no news, Smith. We've known it all along, but—"

"Wait a minute, sir," pleaded the cub. "That's only baby graft. I'm going to show you where the real strong-arm work comes in. The crossing when finished will be a mile long. The specifications for the concrete of the retaining walls call for two parts of stone to one part of sand. Well, they're using two parts of sand to one part of stone. It will place the lives of the traveling public in danger; but what does that amount to when it's saving somebody one dollar on every cubic yard of concrete? If this 'shaving' is kept up to the end of the job, the total cut will amount to over one hundred and twenty thousand dollars. The city will be trimmed for twelve thousand dollars, the State for thirty thousand dollars, and the railroad for seventy-eight thousand dollars. Who gets the graft?"

McArthur had been sitting up straight for the last minute or so, regarding the cub reporter with unfeigned astonishment. Now he said:

"Say, Jimmy"—and the sudden familiarity was sweet to the boy's ears—"where did you pull down all this stuff?"

"My father is professor of civil engineering in the Polytechnic Institute. For five years before that he was in charge of the construction work on the Colorado Central Railway. He's been watching this grade-crossing business—watching it on the sly. He tipped me off to it. I've got his written report on it. We went together this morning to the mixing plants. At one of 'em we found one man shoveling from the broken-stone car to eight men shoveling from the sand-and-gravel car. What does that look like? I'm asking you again, Mr. McArthur, who gets the graft?"

"Oh, I suppose Brock's in on it. Who else?"

"Henry B. Comerford."

McArthur whistled. Comerford's name had never been mixed up with anything shady before. He was one of the most "respectable" men in the city.

"Burton & Bailey are dummies," went on Smith. "Brock and Comerford are getting the dough. I've run everything

down to its own little hole, and can prove it. Do you want the story? It's a beat."

"I should say yes!" shouted the city editor. "But I'm afraid it's too big for you to handle, Jimmy. I'll call in Hill."

"No use," said the cub with forced composure. He drew from his pocket a sheaf of paper closely typewritten, and laid it on the desk. "There's the grade-crossing story—to the last word you can say on it. I wrote it at home."

As he finished, he looked up, and saw Waldron standing within the doorway; but on the instant the managing editor turned quickly, and went away.

And so it was that when Gordon came back to the office at eight o'clock that evening, the first thing his eyes lit on was a four-column scare head from which Henry Comerford's name struck out at him, as it were, with the force of a blow. McArthur himself, before going to supper, had placed it on his desk. It topped a big bundle of galley proofs covering the day's grist.

Gordon felt the sinews of his arms tighten and the muscles screw up as if by misadventure he had taken hold of a galvanic battery. He dropped into his chair, and the bit of paper in his hand fluttered like a leaf as he sensed the damning accusation against the father of the girl he loved.

At last he laid the head down, and picked up the story itself. It was circumstantially, graphically told, backed up by evidence on every essential point. There was no escape from it—no chance for rebuttal.

Young Smith had done his work well, had won his spurs. He had proved Comerford to be a thief, had handcuffed him with Brock, that prince of thieves; had shown him up as worthy of a choice position in the rogues' gallery. It only remained for Gordon to place his O. K. to the story to brand Comerford in public forever.

His mind flew back to the night—only forty-eight hours ago—when the daughter of this man had declared that if he should suddenly turn thief she would expose him as relentlessly as she would an utter stranger, and would

want him—Joe Gordon—to do the same.

"God!" he cried aloud. "How easy it is to prate of doing things we never expect to be called upon to do!"

And this brought the question straight home to him. What should—no, what would he do? To kill this story would be to discredit himself with the entire staff, for, of course, it was common property now, from composing room to press room. It would be to eat his own words, renounce his own policy, betray, virtually, the men who trusted in him.

He got up and paced the floor in agony of mind. He felt himself to be suddenly old and weary of living. Bess Comerford's face came before him as he had seen it only that morning—white and startled, with lips a-tremble and eyes fear-haunted. Could it be that from her father's outburst at the breakfast table she had guessed—dimly, it is true—at his guilty secret? Had fathomed, in some slight degree, the cause of his uneasiness? And if so, was he—Gordon—the man who loved her, whom she loved, to turn this suspicion to certainty, to crush her with sorrow, and heap shame upon her?

To and fro the young man walked, wrenched and hacked in the grip of mighty passions new to him, seeking in vain for some way out of the frightful maze in which he found himself.

And, in the same hour, Bess Comerford, in answer to a summons from Mrs. Martin Brock that had sent terror spurting through her veins, was speeding privately to an interview with that lady in her own home.

## CHAPTER V.

Waldron had been faithful to his trust from the boss. He had brought him proofs of the grade-crossing story and its scare head. Mrs. Brock was present. As her husband read, and without comment laid slip after slip aside, she, in turn, went through them. It was perhaps the worst lashing ever given the boss of Blattenburg—a biting, stinging exposition of greedy graft that, by comparison, made highway robbery seem a nursery pastime.

Garrulous as Nellie Brock ordinarily was, there were times when instinct bade her hold her peace. This was one of them. She had not studied Martin Brock for a score of years in vain. The deep-breathed silence, the half-closed eyes, the ceaseless twitching of the fleshy nose portended ruthless action—and none the less merciless because of check and curb.

Mrs. Brock covertly rolled the scare head into a little cone, which she secreted in her hand, and got up and left the room. It was then that she telephoned to Comerford's daughter.

Waldron sat on in the silence he knew better than to break. His eyes were fixed on the little stack of typewritten sheets lying at Brock's elbow. His trained sense told him it was newspaper copy. What was it about? What mine was the boss going to spring on some unsuspecting foe?

He was not to know, for, though Brock trusted many men, each one's trust was a thing apart, and only Brock himself surveyed the finished pattern.

"All right, Waldron," he said at length, in his usual tone. "You've done me a favor. Come 'round and see me to-morrow—about noon."

Waldron rose. He knew Brock too well to ask questions.

"Good night," he said laconically, and walked out of the house, sold into bondage of his own free will.

Then the old boss turned to the pile of copy at his elbow, and addressed himself to the reading of it anew, scanning each word and line with jealous eye. Mrs. Brock, sitting that afternoon behind the curtains of the adjoining room, had heard him dictate the matter to the *Times* man, who had skillfully turned it into "red-hot stuff" as he went along. And after this he had summarized the story so that the main points were set forth in single lines in a single page.

While Brock was thus engaged, Mrs. Brock was receiving Bess Comerford in the drawing-room across the hall. The girl had all but run from one house to the other—the distance was not great—and had arrived breathless and shivering with fright.

"What is it about father?" she gasped. "Tell me—all—at once—the very worst!"

Now, Nellie Brock was not a bad-hearted woman. She was made of rather ropy clay, it is true, and her sentiments were a little on the "five-and-ten-cent" order; but there were moments—regrettably rare—when she could rise above her limitations and be really admirable. She was shocked now, touched at the sight of this pale and pitiable young creature cringing before the blow that was about to fall.

"Good Lord, child!" she exclaimed. "I never thought you'd take on so! It's nothin' so awful as that; just somethin' we got to put a stopper on before it gets in the papers. Martin's used to it. He's been called a thief every day since they built the new city hall—an' you was wearin' only slips then, I reckon."

"A thief!" whispered Bess. "Is—is that what they call my father?"

Mrs. Brock nodded nonchalantly.

"Yes—an' Martin, too. But don't you worry. It won't get out in print. That's why I sent for you—to stop it. What ain't published don't hurt. There's lots of men in this town—big monkey monks—that's doin' just what your father done—takin' a little here an' there on the side as it comes their way. Their friends know it, or guess at it, but who cares, so long as it don't come out in print? It's the damn newspapers that make all the trouble!"

The lady's fluency threatened the attendant curtailment of her respiratory powers; but only her heaving bosom gave evidence of discomfort. She stoically repressed all other signs of it. Both were standing—Mrs. Brock at just the right angle from the chandelier to blaze forth in all her bejeweled splendor—the girl, a crushed and broken thing, still lingering by the door, one hand fastened on the chair back near her, the other fluttering about her slim white throat.

"I asked you," she said, in a suffocating voice, "to tell me the worst at once—all of it. Will you please do so? I—you are trying to be kind, I know, but I—I cannot wait."

She moved forward a step or two, her burning eyes fixed on the other's broad, fat face.

Mrs. Brock hesitated, then held out the little curl of paper lying in her hand.

"I guess that's the quickest way to get it over with," she observed. "Martin's got the whole business in the other room. But them headlines'll tell you what you want to know without wadin' through the particklers."

But as Bess, approaching her, put out her hand to take the paper, Mrs. Brock withdrew it.

"Look here, little girl," she said compassionately, "you're worried a'most to death. Don't take on so. It'll all blow over. I'll tell you how to fix it up. Just remember, graftin' ain't stealin'—like snatchin' pocketbooks. Everybody does it that gets a chance. Your father ain't no worse than the biggest in the land. Brace up, Miss Comerford. I'm goin' to see you through."

Whereupon Mrs. Brock shook out the proof slip, and passed it to the girl.

Bess Comerford read the great black-letter words slowly, as a child learning its lesson. So long she stood there that the worthy lady watching her grew nervous.

"Come," she spoke up, "the worst of it is over. Now we'll get busy."

"I don't think I quite understand," said the other painfully. "You said it was not published yet, but here—"

She paused, and held up the paper questioningly. It shook until the crinkling of it could be heard. Nellie Brock laid her hand on the girl's shoulder.

"That's only the proof, child—the thing they print off before they put it in the paper. It's all down there at the *Tribune* office ready to come out tomorrow unless you stop it. Will you do it?"

"What must I do?"

"Go to Gordon—he's your beau, ain't he?—an' tell him to call off his dog. Tell him you won't stand for it."

"Oh—no, no! I could not do it!" gasped the young woman, retreating from under the ring-burdened hand. "Oh, I could not—could not—ask him that!"

Her own words to Gordon came ringing in her ears; the assured complacency with which she had urged him to pillory every citizen caught in dishonest acts; her own father, should the impossible come to pass!

"No," she repeated dully, "I could not ask him that."

Mrs. Brock, having risen to her highest heights, now dropped back to the lowlands of her ordinary self; and with this relapse her chronic malady took charge of her.

"Oh, yes, you'll do it," she said thickly. "You'll not only do it, my dear, but you'll tell him to quit makin' a fool of himself, an' leave runnin' newspapers to them that knows how. An' you can tell him from me, if you want to, that he'd better sell out an' go to chasin' butterflies—somethin' that can't run round an' bite him, like Martin's goin' to do."

As she uttered this vague threat-red of face, and swelling and sweating for breath—she was a terrifying spectacle to the girl, unaware as she was of the secret of these symptoms.

"What," she faltered, beset now by new fears, "what is Mr. Brock going to do?"

"He's goin' to show up Gordon's father—that's what!" stertorously proclaimed Mrs. Brock. "It's all written up, ready to give to the *Times* if Gordon prints that other stuff."

Bess Comerford's eyes grew wide with horror. She shrank away still farther from the woman.

"He is going to bring charges against a man just dead—who cannot defend himself?" she questioned unbelievingly.

Mrs. Brock wheezed disdainfully.

"Charges!" she echoed. "Well, I guess not. It's facts—proofs—Martin's goin' to give. It'll make Blattenburg look like circus day when it comes out—people will be runnin' 'round so. An' it'll make old lady Gordon stay indoors for a while, or I miss my guess."

Suddenly the girl straightened up. Her eyes grew hard—determined-looking. She seemed to throw aside, as though it were a passing mood, the mantle of fear that had enveloped her;

and she walked resolutely over to Mrs. Brock.

"Tell me," she commanded, "just exactly what you mean. In few words, please."

"It's easy told," returned Mrs. Brock, with spirit. "If your father's a thief, Bill Gordon was a bigger one—only he didn't get found out. He's been pickin' plums here in Blattenburg ever since the tree began to grow. He could hardly wait for 'em to get ripe, he was that keen for 'em. An' here's his son throwin' fits an' talkin' 'bout cleanin' up the city! Oh, Lord!"

It was Mrs. Brock's intention to indulge in sarcastic laughter; but it turned out to be a strangling spell instead. Bess Comerford waited until it was over, then she said very quietly:

"I will go to see Mr. Gordon. It is quite understood, is it not, that if he does not publish this—this article we've been speaking of, Mr. Brock will not publish his?"

Mrs. Brock nodded emphatically.

"Sure. One from one leaves nothin'—an' no noise. My electric is waitin' for us out in front. I knew you'd go. An'"—she drew down both eyes knowingly—"I am goin' with you. I'll wait outside, of course."

## CHAPTER VI.

It was after nine o'clock when they reached the *Tribune* office. There was but one clerk behind the counter, and he was busy with a couple of "want-ad" men. Mrs. Brock remained in the brougham at the curb. Bess walked in through the entrance and tapped on Gordon's door. She was quite composed, but very pale. Her one fear was that Joe might be away; then she would have to hunt for him.

There was no answer to her first summons, and so she tried again—this time rapping with the decision of one who will not be denied.

Presently the door was pulled open rudely, and Gordon, with lowering brow, confronted her. His expression changed to surprise—confusion—alarm.

"You—Bess!" he stammered, and turned toward his proof-piled desk.

The girl stepped in quickly, and closed the door.

"I know all about it, Joe," she said, in low, even tones. "Mrs. Brock told me. She showed me the copy of the headlines. I've come to talk it over with you."

She sat down near the desk; and the young man, dropping into his chair, exclaimed bitterly:

"Waldron! He has done this!"

"Nothing matters, Joe," said the girl, "but one solitary thing. Are you going to publish that article?"

"Bess! Oh, Bess!" The anguish of his cry smote her to the heart. "What am I to do—what—what? I am committed to the tell-the-truth policy at any cost, no matter who—"

"I understand," she broke in. "And it was I who urged you to it. I—I little guessed how soon it would come home to me. It seems"—she laughed a strange, broken little mockery of mirth—"that it is as you said; the truth is a terrible weapon—oh, a cruel, deadly, ravaging weapon! One to make us fear to look our own in the eyes lest we see there signs of guilt!"

Involuntarily a sob broke from her, and her hands went up as if to shut from view the vision her words had called before her.

Gordon groaned.

"Bess! Bess!" he cried. "For God's sake tell me what to do—what I ought to do!" He sprang up from his chair and began pacing the room. "I've been driven near to madness this night. I've argued and argued the case over and over, and it simply has resolved itself to this: Were it any man in the world except your father, I would not hesitate a moment. I would strike—as I would have to—at another man's wife, and his daughter, and his kindred—sorrowfully, God knows—but I would strike because—because the truth compelled it. But as it stands—great God! I feel like an assassin! I feel as if I were about to plunge a dagger into your unprotected heart, the while I called on Heaven to witness how I loved you!"

"Joe! Don't—don't, Joe!" begged

the girl, as if indeed she were pleading for her life.

"I have thought of my own mother," went on the unhappy man, "and wondered if she could survive such a blow were it dealt her—especially by some good friend! And, Bess, I know that it would kill her, slay her as surely as though a knife were driven through her. And yet, were my father standing in the place of yours to-night, and some poor fool was running a paper as I am running this, could I blame him if he told the truth about him, truth that would hold up the torch of warning to others who were going wrong? Bess—Bess—tell me what to do! In the name of the love I bear you from 'way down in my soul—tell me!"

Gordon stood before her, haggard, wild-eyed, the great beads of sweat rolling down his face, his hands stretched out to her imploringly. She looked up at him through a rush of blinding tears, and her hands went out to his, seeking for them gropingly. When they met, she drew him to her gently, until, falling upon his knees at her feet, his face was close to hers.

"Joe," she breathed; "dear Joe!"

All the mother instinct of her rose up to guard this man from harm, to comfort and sustain him. Leaning toward him, she laid her cheek against his, and her hand stole upward to his head, and rested there, smoothing and caressing it in sweet abandon.

"Joe," she went on, after the moment's silence, "you could not aim this blow at your mother—you could not do it—and you cannot aim it at mine. Why, Joe, if you did, don't you see it would make it impossible for me—for us? Oh, my dear, I am pleading with you—not to spare my father, whose sin has found him out; not even to spare my mother, whose heart this dreadful shame would break. I—I am pleading with you, dearest, for your own peace and happiness—for ours—for the hope of the days to come—our love—oh, Joe, Joe, the love we bear each other! Your love! My love!"

With a little cry of absolute surrender, she raised her head, and, looking

him in the eyes an instant, bent slowly forward until her lips touched his.

Roaring down from the hilltop, breaking all speed limits without the fear of interdiction, came the heavy touring car of the boss of Blattenburg. The old man was leaning back in the tonneau, his jaws set tight, his eyes almost closed, his nose twitching spasmodically. But a few moments before, he had learned from a servant that Bess Comerford had called on Mrs. Brock, and the two had gone off together.

Instantly surmising their errand, and knowing his wife's proclivity to speak her mind, the boss was racing to the Tribune office in the hope of arriving there in time to prevent the miscarriage of his plans. He was in a rage that shook him from head to foot—a blasting, venomous passion that could strike to kill.

Mrs. Brock, sitting in her brougham, saw the big car whirl around the corner and come dashing toward her. Leaning over the door, she waved her hand to Martin, and called to him as he jumped out on the walk. He strode to the electric, and stood looking in at her, swearing viciously. She calmly let him exhaust his vocabulary, then she said:

"Now, if you can listen to common sense, I'll tell you somethin'. The girl is in there, an' she can do more in a minute to make Gordon quit than you could in a year. You don't need to flash that article you got there on him. The girl knows all about it. I told her. That's what fetched her. She wouldn't beg Gordon just on her-own account—oh, no!—but on his account she'd go the limit. An' she won't tell him anything 'bout his father. She'll keep that back, an' go to him on another tack. I know. It's a way us fool women have. Now, you keep out of it, Mart, an' give the girl a chance."

"Chance—hell!" shouted Brock. "I'm going in. I got a word to say to that young rooster that'll trim the feathers off him."

He turned on his heel and made for the entrance, regardless of the little knot of spectators that had sprung up.

With astonishing agility, Mrs. Brock clambered down from the brougham; and, by the time Joe Gordon had opened to the thunderous knock of the boss, she was at his heels, and passed into the room with him.

"Look here, Gordon," snarled Brock, leveling a heavy digit at him, "I've come to tell you a thing or two. You can't go 'round this town spilling 'truth' like you was a watering cart. You got to handle 'truth' mighty careful—like glass—or something'll get busted. And you're due for a busting right now. You've reached your finish, understand? You're all in. You're a dead one. I'm going to bury you. And, by God, it's going to be for keeps—you'll stay buried!"

He rammed his hand into his breast pocket, and drew out a wad of paper. Gordon, crimson with anger, fingers crooked, eyes gleaming dangerously, had started toward the man; but Bess stepped in between them.

"Mr. Brock," she said sweetly, "I am sure you will be glad to hear that Mr. Gordon is not going to print that article. He has decided to give up the paper. I've persuaded him to. He is going to sell it to Harmon Ellis—tomorrow."

"On one condition," growled Gordon at Brock. "He's to keep every man now here—except Waldron. He's to fire him, neck and crop!"

Brock's head went up, and on the broad face of his worthy wife a pleased expression dawned.

"Is this straight?" he demanded suspiciously, looking at the girl, not at Gordon.

She went to him, and laid her hand confidently on his brawny arm.

"Yes"—and she smiled into the fierce blue eyes—"it's quite straight. Mr. Gordon is going upstairs now to notify the staff. He's doing it, Mr. Brock, because—well, because I wouldn't be an editor's wife for anything in the world!"

She laughed—a little, happy laugh—and Brock's hard features relaxed a trifle. He stuffed the wad of paper back into his pocket, and, turning to Mrs. Brock, remarked:

"I'm damned if she hasn't checkmated me!"

Without further ado, the boss of Blattenburg walked out of the door. But Nellie Brock lingered an instant.

"You done well, Miss Comerford," she wheezed; "a good job all 'round. Come an' see me some time. I'm goin' to make Thursday my afternoon, or maybe Tuesday—I ain't decided yet. But you'll see it in the *Trib*. Watch the society news. Aw revoy."

And, airily fluttering her glittering fingers at the lovers. Mrs. Martin Ducey Brock, née Ellen Jane Harahan, followed her husband into the street.

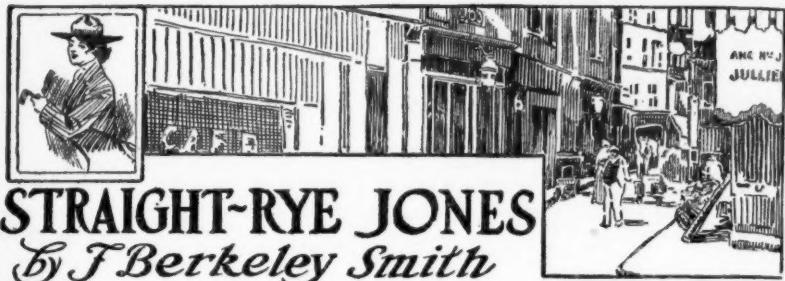
## THE NARROW THINGS OF HOME

NARROW the window ledge where bloom my flowers,  
Each in its pot a little tree of joy;  
Serene am I in their benign employ,  
Guessing their dumb needs through the fragrant hours.

Narrow the bed where lies my child asleep,  
Soft as a bird beneath the hushing hand  
I stretch to touch him in his slumberland,  
While by his side a happy watch I keep.

Narrow the settle where beside the blaze  
At dreamy eve we sit, my love and I,  
Content to mend the hearth fire, lest it die,  
To serve the gods of Home through all the days.

EMILY SARGENT LEWIS.



# STRAIGHT-RYE JONES

*By F Berkeley Smith*

**J**N Montmartre, a man does not become notorious at a single bound; a familiar character, a "type" whom every one knows and hails in passing takes years to produce.

Straight-rye Jones was one of these. None of us knew exactly where he came from in America. "Out West from God's own country," he used to say, and swear with enthusiasm over the memory. He possessed a strength and a constitution that were amazing. There was in his back, his arms, his deep chest, his broad shoulders, and his legs the strength of a young bull, and in his heart lay his ever-ready good nature. His eyes were blue and generally bloodshot; his hair was a tawny, dull blond, and so seldom cut that it fell below the collar of his coat. Hatless, it blew wild as hemp in the wind. In the café, he brushed it back with his hand. His shapeless features, clean-shaven at intervals, the broad forehead, the flat nose, and the bulldog jaw were freckled like his big, coarse hands. His voice had a certain huskiness about it, and was pitched low and easy, like his laugh. He wore the wide corduroy trousers of the Parisian workman, and in winter wooden sabots and a cowboy hat.

When he lapsed from the language of Western America into the argot of Montmartre, he still retained his favorite exclamations from Montana. These gave a certain ginger to his raw French.

His days he spent in a small café tucked under the "Hotel of the Abyssinians and Madame De Pompadour

"Reunited," a stale café always smelling of yesterday, and in which the most conspicuous touch of cleanliness was the neatly raked strip of sand next to the worn billiard table.

His nights he passed in bars about the markets, where any one but Straight-rye Jones would have had a knife driven into his back in less than a week. It was his good-natured grin, his recklessness, and his colossal strength that saved him, and gave him a safe passport in and out of these dives about the "Halles" frequented by Apaches, by criminals, and their still more dangerous sweethearts.

They welcomed Straight-rye Jones among them as they would have welcomed one of their own. Often when a quick fight occurred they were glad he was there. He was a whirlwind in a fight, drunk or sober, and he was never cold sober, save at short intervals during the day. He used to come back to the café under the "Abyssinians and Madame De Pompadour Reunited," and tell us about the last "scrap."

"I was settin' talkin' to a girl," he would drawl, with a grin, "and in come a couple of them butchers from La Villette."

And then would follow the exclamations from Montana, whose elimination is one of the difficulties in writing this story, as Straight-rye Jones' vocabulary without them is limited, though I never heard him swear before a lady or a child. And once, when he was blind drunk, he had sense enough to hide behind a tree when the two children of Delacour passed.

No one ever spoke ill of Straight-rye Jones.

I have known him to sober up for three days in order to take these two small children of Delacour's to the shady square which lies between the Rue Turgot and the Boulevard Clichy. He had a great fondness for children, and they were safe with him.

Had you chanced to pass now and then on some sunny spring afternoon, you might have seen him sitting on one of the public benches—his sombrero pushed back on his head—a child on each faded corduroy knee, telling them stories. The story about the phantom wolf the "Injuns" trapped to the little boy; and for the little girl, the story of the fairy who lived in the trunk of the tree, and gave every little girl everything she asked for.

"She was a good un," he'd laugh low and explain. "She wa'n't never known to refuse candies an' them little rockin'-hosses—an'an' them stare-eyed dolls what kin say 'popper' and 'mommer'—maybe if youse was to hev asked her fer—less see—one er them little—their little—kitchuns. Pshaw! I'd er oughter thought er that, hedn't I? One er them little kitchuns, whar yer kin cook and weigh and shut the door of the stove tight. Waal, she wa'n't never known to refuse."

And he'd laugh that low, easy laugh of Montana that reminds you of the cool twilight, freedom, and a fresh horse. Yes, Straight-rye Jones was fond of children.

And after such an afternoon with the little Delacours, which happened only once in a while, for he had to prepare for it and tell Delacour in advance, he'd take the little boy and the little girl back to Delacour's studio from which their mamma had "gone."

Then Straight-rye Jones would shamble slowly back to the stale café beneath Madame De Pompadour and the ancient tribes reunited where we painters met before dinner for our *apéritif*—his eyes scanning in a dream the edge of the gutter, until it led him half consciously to the door, and he turned in to drink.

He preferred the corner table in the alcove, although he sometimes sat at a smaller one provided with a single chair next to the billiard table when he was broke.

"You ain't never known what it is to love," he once said to me. "You ain't never had no sweetheart what you really loved, and if you had er had—why, we was goin' to be *married*—and she throwed you down? Well! You ain't never loved; and if you had er loved you'd er been down and out like me. Look at me!"

His voice grew thick, and he stared at his half-empty glass of straight rye, and ran his freckled hand through his long, dull hair wearily, pushing it back from his eyes.

"I ain't worth nothin'—*nothin'!*" He began to cry through nervous depression, his big hands in a tremble. "No," he added slowly, "you ain't never truly loved."

And he drained his glass with a gulp, shivered, shoved the empty glass from him, and felt in his trousers pocket to see if he still had enough to pay for his next and mine, which he insisted on, backed up by the persuasion of Montana.

No one inquired where he lived, and, since he never mentioned his domicile, we were too discreet to inquire, for he disappeared often for days and weeks, although it was certain that at one time he lived at the butt end of an alley off the Boulevard Clichy, in a two-story box provided with a pair of stairs, and whose beckoning light over the entrance at night spelled "Hotel." It was quite a lively alley, and as sad as a sewer; a sort of sinister ravine off the gay highway for lost souls to wait in. There are such glimpses of purgatory on earth.

It was safer to keep to the middle of this alley, although sometimes Straight-rye Jones stumbled and lurched along its narrow sidewalk in the dark, and reached his domicile alive. It must, however, be said that it had its note of respectability—a stable for fiacre horses nearly opposite the "Hotel."

He came to the café steadily after

these sudden disappearances, wedged in the corner alcove next to the worn billiard table; and to-day he sat talking to a stranger—a tall, slim girl, with the skin of a Creole, and whose whole life was as false as the pendant pearls in her ears. Her fingers were tapering and long—a fact which Besaçon, the painter, whose satire is caustic, explained were given her for a purpose, since she was a born thief.

"Just as nature provides the ape," continued Besaçon, "with the ability to grasp with the thumb and forefinger."

Besaçon is quite a zoologist.

She inveigled herself into our midst with catlike ingenuity, and with the same feline intelligence she chose the corner in the alcove as her own, and refused to budge; and for two days became a sensation with the story of her life—a spy in the Japanese war, special correspondent to a New York daily, and now broke, with Montmartre as her home and her jewels in the Mont De Piété.

At the end of a week only Straight-rye Jones listened to her, and they drank hard together, for she was too timid to become a model, owing to her father being a judge of the supreme court and her sister-in-law an English duchess. But she could "write," she said, "poetry," and "if she could only write her life—no, honest—listen, dearie."

And here she touched me for a bond of sympathy, but I bit not, for she was more dangerous than a bottle of strychnine.

"I'm a gypsy," she confessed at last, with a sob, "and I'm sorry I've lied to you boys."

Whereat Straight-rye Jones laid a heavy paw gently on her cold-creamed neck.

"You're a slick kid," said he, "and too tall for your age."

He rolled her a fresh cigarette, for she smoked furiously whenever it was possible, and borrowed tobacco right and left—this girl whom we called "La Tzigane," on account of her "gypsy" blood.

The café, beneath the hotel of the savage tribes and the *grande dame* re-

united, prospered in its own stale way on bad liquor and popularity; but Straight-rye Jones under La Tzigane's evil eye became hopeless. There were days when he begged for poison. There were days and nights when he lay in the Hospital Bichat on the verge of delirium tremens. There were days when he had them, and lay strapped to a cot; yet none of these crises seemed to hurt him to an apparent extent.

During these forced absences, La Tzigane sat alone. Now and then she went out to the hospital to see him, and to borrow.

It was the fourth day after he returned to the café—sober, with a clear eye and a sane brain, and a firm decision to leave drink alone—that she insisted on my drinking her health.

In a week he was back again at Bichat; and when again he returned, he forgave La Tzigane as he forgave everybody. He, like the good fairy in the tree, "wa'n't never known to refuse."

It was May. The air was soft with a kindly warmth. Straight-rye Jones sat on a bench along the Boulevard Clichy, basking in the good sunshine. It was nearly noon, and the sordid boulevard was alive with its morning marketing from the pushcarts, and noisy with their owners crying their wares. From where he sat he could glance up the steep Rue Lepic, alive with market carts and choked with a slowly moving human stream of women in wrappers—their dyed hair in pigtailed or curl papers—women who had gone to bed with the dawn, and were up to bargain for a cabbage or half a rabbit.

Along the Boulevard Clichy, the débris and filth of the night were being swept out of the all-night supper places and the cabarets—stale, black holes, that only a few hours before had been glittering in electricity, and alive with the melancholy waltz and the popping cork.

In broad daylight, after its feverish, wide-open nights, during which its worn paint and tinsel are disguised by light and life, Montmartre shows its cheap

carcass; its illusion is laid bare. It is as if the lid of a dance hall was lifted, the sunlight let in; and one looked down upon the flimsy scenery and the rubbish and dust beneath.

He could see, too, from where he sat, the red windmill of the Moulin Rouge—still in daylight, for it only grinds at night. It, too, was being swept out; and an electrician in a pair of blue overalls was up on a ladder mending its colored lights.

On the terrace of the cafés lounged pale, collarless gentlemen, also forced temporarily out of bed for an early absinth. They were, for the most part, idle criminals whom one does not awkwardly jostle in a crowd without politely begging their pardon. They are unusually polite under these circumstances. There is nothing that touches the pride of a thief more than to be treated like a gentleman.

Straight-rye Jones saw nothing of these things—they were too familiar to him. He sat hatless, his chin in his hands, absorbed in thought, gazing absently at a sparrow bolder than its mates who had hopped near him.

"Come here, you durned, cunnin' little cuss," he drawled softly; and he felt in his pockets for the remnant of his breakfast, a stale roll. "Thar! I ain't er goin' to hurt ye."

He crushed the roll against the bench with his hand. The bird fluttered away in fright—that panic which is the fore-runner of confidence—wheeled in the air, and fluttered down to his feet, to fill himself well with the crumbs.

For a long while Straight-rye Jones sat immovable, thinking. A temperament such as his is capable of extremes. Often the greatest strength is born of the greatest weakness. It is the even temperament which is so often capable of nothing.

Slowly an idea developed in his brain—an idea that had occurred to him before, but which to him appeared so vast and difficult that its development seemed hopeless. The warm sunshine stimulated him. It possessed, this sunny noon, the quieting stimulant of a drink. It was a new sensation to Straight-rye

Jones. The idea developed itself in the clear sunlight into a vast plan of absorbing importance.

"I'm a-goin' to move," he muttered to himself, "out whar the air is fresher. Yes, I *got* to. It ain't no use in trying it here. I'd give in afore a week. It's too near the old game."

He began to think seriously of a place called the Hornet's Nest, out near the slaughterhouses, close to the fortifications, where rent was cheap. He knew some butchers and some painters who lived out there. It was a long tramp from the heart of Montmartre. This in itself he considered a help. He was like a drowning man grasping at a straw, yet with a certain half-delirious confidence that he could swim. It does not take long for a man in this condition to make up his mind.

He thought, too, of the two children of Delacour's, and vaguely of La Tzigané.

Then slowly he extracted from an inside pocket a small packet enveloped in three thicknesses of newspaper and tightly bound with a string. Although it was his habit to feel often whether it was safe, he had not examined it for a long while. He fumbled at the knots, bit the string through twice with his cornlike teeth, and opened the wrapper carefully. It contained six letters still in their envelopes. From the fifth he drew a faded kodak.

It was that of a young girl with fair hair, in a short riding skirt. She was standing in the wind at the corner of a ranch house. The only thing distinguishable in her features were her dimpled chin and her smile. The rest was blotted in the deep shadow of the intense sunlight of Montana.

For some moments, he held the faded kodak in the hollow of his hand, his eyes searching the shadow of her face. The ranch house became a blur. A big tear rolled, dropped, and spattered between it and the bottom of the short skirt.

Straight-rye Jones closed his eyes.

"I'm a-goin' to try, Mazie," he prayed. "So help me God, Mazie, I'm a-goin' to try. Yer said yer'd marry me if I could only keep straight. Yer said

yer'd marry me," he kept repeating to himself, "an' I'm a-goin' to try."

A woman with the rouge fresh on her lips, who had been marketing without it in the morning up the Rue Lepic, passed him, and smiled, for she knew him—that discreet smile of imbecilic disdain with which her kind favor the intimate stranger.

Spasmodically Straight-rye Jones clutched the packet of letters, badly creasing the kodak. He did not know why he did this; but, after all, it was only natural, like many gestures that our brain thanks our hands for having done, and which the brain appears not to have primarily directed.

The sparrow flew back, and Straight-rye Jones was glad to see it, for he was smiling now, and telling it a promise. He had to tell it to somebody, you see, who was respectable.

Having made his decision, Straight-rye Jones changed his domicile from the alley to the Hornet's Nest. Nothing could be stranger or more incongruous in contrast than this wooden building of studios, which stood isolated in one of the vacant lots opposite the vast entrance yards of the government's slaughterhouses. It indeed resembled somewhat a hornet's nest, since it was round, and gray, and had a small door as its single entrance and exit for the swarm of three-score of painters and bohemians, and their sweethearts, who found a refuge within, and who were hand-in-hand friends with the butchers opposite. Meat, therefore, was the easier to obtain.

The whole atmosphere of this strange settlement was savage enough. It was as if the Temple of the Knife and Certain Death, whose floors, corridors, and gutters were continually flushed with blood, had taken the stranded little Temple of Art under its wing.

It is said that the Hornet's Nest once figured in the exhibition of 1900. However this may be, its aspect was singular. It was as round as a cake. It might easily have served as a roundhouse for locomotives, an aquarium, or a one-ring circus, had not its second-

hand shell been destined to contain as many studios as could be gotten out of its two floors; the top one being the most popular, since its red-tiled floor, upon which the circle of studio doors opened, was well lighted by a skylight, broiling hot in summer and a sieve for the wind and snow of winter. The ground floor beneath was dark, damp, and as gloomy as a cellar.

Both floors were provided in the center with a brass water spigot. The water was free, but not popular.

In the matter of studios, the cake had been cut into forty thin slices, each segment containing a small skylight, and renting for the modest sum of fifty francs for three months.

It is needless to say that the crowd who lived there were poor—desperately poor. Barely five in the lot spoke the same language, though their sweethearts were mostly French. The Hornet's Nest had gathered beneath its roof Poles, Swedes, and Spaniards, Germans, Greeks, and Russians; the only American being Straight-rye Jones; and the only Frenchman, a dreamer named Danet, who wrote verses when he was hungriest, and wore to the Salon a silk hat, a sticky, multicolored sweater of uncured Norwegian sheep's wool, a frock coat, tennis shoes, and the paint-stained wedding trousers of his roommate.

It was in this place, then, that Straight-rye Jones had chosen to keep from drink. The wiry, agile, fair-skinned butchers opposite were too busy with killing to drink much, the inmates of the Hornet's Nest too poor. Coal in winter, when they often chipped in and herded together in a studio, and food all the year round, were in themselves difficult enough to obtain, since no one worked unless driven to it from privation.

La Tzigane was not long in following Straight-rye Jones. She, too, rented a studio in the Hornet's Nest. She cared nothing for Straight-rye Jones, but she wanted a watchdog in case of need, and some one to borrow from in idle necessity.

Straight-rye Jones lent her a cot bed,

two bad pictures, a water pitcher, and thirteen francs; and she stole the rest from him by ingenious degrees, objects from his meager store of possessions that she needed.

Straight-Rye Jones never let her know he knew. He was growing happier daily. The nights when he walked the floor were beginning to grow shorter; yet what he passed through during ten days after his decision on the bench had been far worse than he had experienced in the hospital.

Not since that morning in the hospital had he taken a drink.

"It's hell at first," was his only remark.

Though La Tzigane's door was close to his own on the ground floor, and she spent most of her time loafing in his studio, Straight-rye Jones still stuck to milk, which he practically lived on. He would sit for hours watching another fellow paint—silent, amused as a child, his elbows on his knees; and, though he was hail-fellow-well-met with the crowd in the Hornet's Nest, he was welcomed even more heartily by the butchers.

Whenever he strolled into the abattoir a shout would go up, for they all knew him.

"*Eh voilà! Stret Ree!*" shouted the butchers; and the girls working with them in the pens shouted "*Bon jour*" to him, for these butchers will not work without this girl helper, whom they flirt with and chaff, and who is never much over eighteen, well built, chosen for her good looks, dressed in a short skirt, thick, dark-blue stockings, and sabots—bare-armed, bare-necked; and always a ribbon, pink or blue, in a tiny bow tied in her neatly dressed hair.

It is she who is the soubrette in the daily tragedy. Straight-rye Jones knew them all. One—Jacqueline—fell in love with him until her own sweetheart knifed her; another, a small brunette with hair as black and glossy as a Japanese, knitted him a muffler. But neither tempted him to drink. I be-

lieve the man who had tempted him would have been knifed for his pains.

Over his studio cot—a poorer one than he had lent La Tzigane—hung a faded kodak. He had fashioned for it a little wooden frame. No one ever mentioned this photograph save La Tzigane. One afternoon, a week after he hung it up, La Tzigane mentioned it. She made several turns in the studio, glancing at it askance out of her snake-like eyes.

Finally her curiosity got the better of her.

"Who is that woman there?" she inquired.

Then she shut her red mouth tight and backed slowly away from its owner. Straight-rye Jones had not uttered a word in reply. He simply held the door open for her, and La Tzigane backed slowly out of it, gazing at his eyes, in which there lurked something akin to murder.

A year passed, and again Straight-rye Jones disappeared. Three years, and no one saw him. Some said he had gone to America. This information was, however, vague.

One afternoon I turned the corner of the Rue Henri Monnier. To my amazement, he stood before me.

"For gosh sake!" he drawled. You see, his language had grown milder.

The very little girl he held by the hand I did not recognize as Delacour's. Straight-rye Jones placed her very small hand in mine, for she was shy.

"Yours?" I stammered.

"Yes," he drawled, his whole face alight. "Tell what father's goin' to get yer?" But she pressed her fair little head against her father's coat. "One er them little"—he coaxed, and bent to reassure her—"one er them little—them little—"

"Rockin'-hor-thiz," lisped the little girl.

There flashed across my mind the kodak from Montana—and I was right.



**A**LL Leyte agreed that Caldwell was the one man in the service who could stand promotion. They went further than that, and admitted that he deserved to stay in Leyte and keep up his good work, that it was a shame the Powers That Be in Manila ordered him south to Mindanao, to Zamboanga, the heart of the Moro country, where a hundred thousand Mohammedan Filipinos with a thirst for Christian blood waited their chance to fight the American government.

Caldwell, by the way, had done a rather neat thing in rounding up a nest of stray pulajanes who had ravaged the Leyte coast for some time. He escaped with a slight arm wound and a feeling that he wished to remain Lieutenant Caldwell and stay in Leyte, where he could rest on his laurels and refuse fresh fields to conquer. But an officious some one recommended him for a captain, and some one else started a commotion over his bravery, and several of the officers' wives talked to The Powers, and before Caldwell knew what was happening he was Captain Caldwell, senior inspector of the Zamboanga Moro district, facing as dangerous and delicate a situation as any newly promoted Leyte officer ever faced.

He stayed at Camp Heithley the usual amount of time, was rowed across Lake Lanao with a party of officials' wives,

who were touring the country, had a peek at a harem, saw a little of a native wedding feast, where they served the Americans heaping platters of young carabao steak, morisqueta, and fish balls; learned to distinguish a datochief—from a sultan, and a cadi—judge—from a pandita—priest—and to know that a radjamunda was a crown prince; that there still lived descendants to the last Moro king, and that the various sultans and datos were strong tribal leaders, with several thousand of slaves to do their slightest will.

The party of officials and their wives went north to Manila, convinced that they had seen everything to be seen in the fearful Moro country.

After they left and the camp laughed over their tourist enthusiasm, Caldwell found himself confronted with new, perplexing work—the work of inspection. Accordingly, he started to the various posts, prepared to find almost anything in the way of massacres, unexpected mutiny, religious outrages, or plain battle.

Major Bruce, at Camp Heithley, was telling him about the last onslaught at Camp Gantur, a Moro outlaw settlement, and of the good work done by Carl Sidney, the young lieutenant.

"What sort is Sidney?" asked Caldwell, as he studied the map of the country before him.

"As good as they come," admitted the major generously, "and he's sweat-

ed blood with those Moro beasts ever since he's been here. He's had the whole responsibility on his shoulders for four years, and it's telling. I've seen him do more in two hours that told in the end than you people do up north in two months. He transacts all matrimonial alliances for his troops, divorces them if necessary, has an awfully good service in Arabic—you ought to hear him spout it. He scolds those native soldiers like children, and occasionally shuts a fractious wife up in a big water can and has her rolled up and down the hill until she stops scolding. This sounds like a Sunday supplement story, but it's the truth. And it's not funny. It's hard, grinding work, and if he left it undone there'd be hell broke loose in a second."

Caldwell nodded, impressed by the fussy little major's enthusiasm.

"How old is he?"

"About thirty. Straight, and strong, and reliant. Honest as they make them, and with a sense of humor that always saves the day. I tell you, Caldwell, there's a post that you needn't wake in the night to think about. You're lucky because it's the strongest in your district, and it's in the center of the most dangerous Moro settlement. He even acts as army surgeon when they're in the field; says the constabulary doctors are soft, and he can't be bothered."

"He's been there four years?" Caldwell asked.

"Over that. Why?"

"It's bad. Too long."

Which was all Caldwell could be induced to say on the matter. They talked of other things, and Caldwell looked out at the blue lake, where native boats floated to and fro, churning the waters with their crude motion. Presently Charley Ling, the cook, came shuffling to the door.

"Me can no do," he told the major sullenly.

"You mean we can't have biscuits?" The major's chin quivered with disappointment.

"Me can do no—me can no do," repeated the Chinaman, with calm determination.

Caldwell looked at him critically. Then he smiled, lifted the third finger of his right hand, and beckoned. A change came into the yellow face—a smile, a cringing smile of obedience.

"Me can do, velly well, me can glad do, me do, me do, me do." He shuffled away, repeating the words.

The major grinned. "Caldwell, you're second cousin to a wizard. How did you come across with old Charley? He's a fiend when he wants to be; starves us on rice and native fish. And his biscuits—say, I dream of those biscuit when we're on the march."

Caldwell reached out his hand.

"See that?" he said, indicating a broad, heavy silver ring covered with cabalistic signs of a Chinese character.

The major nodded.

"What's the spell?" he asked lightly.

"I don't know. A mandarin of the second rank gave it to me for—for helping him one time in a pretty tight place. He told me it was the symbol of the Highbinders' Society, similar to our Masonic fraternity, you know. He vowed that if you held it up to a Chinaman the way I did to your Charley, he would do what you told him, no matter what you might ask."

The major eyed the ring with respect.

"You wouldn't like to rent it out for a few weeks?" he asked. "Maybe I could train Charley in the way he should go."

Caldwell laughed.

"No," he confessed, "I wouldn't, I'm superstitious about it. That's a pet theory of mine, major, that we're all superstitious about something. Man cannot exist without a glint of mysticism in his make-up. Whether we shy at walking under a ladder, or sitting down to thirteen at chow, or signing papers on Friday—it's all the same. Down in some romantic, cobwebby corner of our hearts there rests a deeply rooted superstition. We can't hedge it. And this is mine: I believe in the ring's power. I believe the mandarin did not lie to me, and I feel that the time is going to come when that ring will serve its purpose."

"Better than providing a dyspeptic major with beaten biscuit?" The major was plainly incredulous.

"I do. Laugh all you want to—you may be right. But I don't believe you are. And I'm going to give that ring all the rope it wants. After what I did for the mandarin he wouldn't be apt to lie."

They had plates heaped with beaten biscuit for chow, and flaky pastry strips centered with rich oriental preserves, and chicken fried in a way that made the major plan to confiscate Caldwell's ring. For breakfast the next morning, more biscuits greeted them, and poached eggs on thin, warm toast, and coffee made with egg and flavored delicately with rum.

Caldwell said good-by to the camp and started for Carl Sidney's post. It was rough traveling, even though the escort knew the way, and by the time he was greeting a tired yet sturdy-looking boy, who smiled as tenderly as a woman, Caldwell was wondering how they ever led marches against Moro outlaws—in reality, he was doing more than wondering; he was secretly disbelieving.

By and by, when Caldwell finished his tour of inspection, Sidney began showing him reports and advising him of the situation existing in the province.

"We've killed off as many as we've had time for," he said easily. "There's about forty thousand around here that need civilizing. They're hostile to the last drop of the gong."

"How do you propose to do it?" asked Caldwell, smiling at his youthful ferocity.

"Shoot 'em off! But the brown devils get hold of old Remington rifles and manage to raise hell with 'em. They come at night and fire into the post. Sometimes we get up and play with them, but more often we sleep straight through, and the next morning find a bunch of bullet marks outside. Then it keeps up until we find out which outlaw or unfriendly sultan is behind the game. That calls our bluff. It means a march, an attack. Captain Caldwell, if you ever see us on an ex-

pedition, you'll know that war with the Moros is—well, it's war."

"Who's your particular pest in the enemy line now?"

Sidney's face set grimly.

"I'm after two of 'em," he said sharply. "One is a radjamunda, crown prince of the Sultan Amai Kurut. The sultan is feeble-minded now, and the radjamunda does all active warfare. They hold the valley and have trained fighting slaves to back 'em. The radjamunda is as fine a specimen as I've ever seen. He's a young chap with a wonderful physique. They worship him in the valley, sing songs about him, and tell stories of his ability as a warrior. If we ever get him, it'll be with his right hand and head cut off."

"Why that?" Caldwell felt as if he were taking a course in Moro warfare.

"They believe that a corpse so mutilated will never go to the seventh heaven, the seventh heaven being any good Mohammedan's idea of bliss. I always try to mutilate the bodies if I can. It puts the fear of Allah into the hearts of the living, and I don't suppose it matters particularly to the dead."

"Who is the other enemy?" interrupted Caldwell discreetly.

"The other? The last descendant of the Moro king. His name is Pianz, and he's worth a million dollars at least. He owns the bulk of the silver mines, to say nothing of the largest crop of slaves in the island. He has two daughters; they call them both princess. The older one, Belinga, was educated in Hongkong, and married a rich Manila merchant. She was fearfully fat, and considered a beauty. The younger, Tanguila, meaning She-of-the-beautiful-ear, is still in her father's house. What complicates matters is this: Tanguila loves the radjamunda, and the radjamunda reciprocates. Take the two forces joined together, and you've got a neat jigsaw puzzle. They'll marry shortly, and then we'll have to apply to Washington to use automatic guns and explosive bullets."

"Sidney, do you play chess?" asked Caldwell abruptly. "I've got my set,

and I'm ready to go to it. The major at Heithley let himself down at checkers, and a poor game, at that. You do play? I knew it!"

Sidney smiled. This was a new type of senior inspector, one who did not demand statistics as to how many prisoners were in the guardhouse since the first of the month, or insist on better order in the quartel, or command that the pet monkeys be shot. So Sidney set up his ivory manikins on the faded old board, and began contemplating a serious onslaught at Caldwell's queen, while Caldwell let the boy rack his brains over the game, while he leaned back and studied him.

A few days later Caldwell left the post. With wistful eyes, Sidney watched the muchacho pack his traps. It seemed a different post since the captain had been with him. Even the disheartening, endless task of slaughter was temporarily suspended, and Sidney had listened to Manila gossip and Leyte stories with a light heart.

After Caldwell was gone, Sidney sat on the veranda of the comandancia in amazement.

"He never left an order about—about anything but chess," he told himself. "And yet I'm going to clean up the country better than ever. Now, why is that—that I'm not discouraged? I wonder if the new senior inspector can realize that—"

Sidney became hopelessly involved in a tangle of logic, and, being convinced that The Powers That Be do not make men senior inspectors merely because of their ability for chess, he decided that Caldwell was deep water. Like the Moro people, it would take many trips of inspection before he caught his meaning.

The next afternoon Malaco, a Moro scout, brought back news that the radjamunda was about to march against the post, that the time was ripe for attacking the radjamunda's fort. Also, it was rumored that the marriage of She-of-the-beautiful-ear was to take place the next week.

The sparkling stars in the clear blue heavens looked down at Sidney's post

to watch the forming of the troops. They saw Sidney bully the men into place, give sharp, quick orders in a tense voice.

"We're going through the cogon region, up the Ramain Valley. Every son of Allah must be silent. The first man who halts, or whines, or falters is shot! Shot, and his right hand and head cut off—understand? We march by the light of the glowworms; there may be parties of the enemies watching the trail. We will crawl inch by inch if I give the word. Remember, we are going to make a success of the expedition. We are going to take the radjamunda's fort, we are going to storm his whole damned place and bring him back prisoner—or dead!"

Sidney's teeth clicked with satisfaction as he said the last.

All night the long, winding line of dark figures covered the treacherous trail, grasping their rifles to their hearts, waiting for daylight for the radjamunda's stone fort to be reached, waiting for their leader's signal to attack, to kill, to conquer.

They had reached the valley. Fleecy pink and white and blue clouds clustered together beside the mountain peaks. The birds sang, and the small wood animals spoke to each other. The valley was awakened, and the grass waved to and fro in the tender breeze. Still the line of soldiers marched doggedly, silent, stoic, waiting for their leader's next command.

In the distance, the stone walls of the radjamunda's fort were seen. Sleeping sentries lay on the broad walls, their Moro weapons ready for use. All over the radjamunda's estate, sleep was paramount. There was a hushed, still atmosphere about the tiny mosque, the women's houses, the slave quarters, the stables, the great palace of the crown prince.

"Down on your faces, on your faces—crawl!" panted Sidney.

Obediently, every red fez cap was hidden in the sharp cogon grass, every sturdy brown body wriggled through the merciless blades of green that stung and cut and scratched and tantalized.

But they crawled, they wriggled, they obeyed.

One of the radjamunda's sentries, waking from his brief nap, looked down at the valley, and saw the cogon grass wave methodically in the morning breeze. Wasso, the sentry, watched the movement with interest. Then he bowed his head reverently and asked Allah to forestall a storm. Such a motion indicated bad weather, and they had planned an attack on the white man—a slaughter which would sicken the government if a true account ever reached them.

Wasso lounged back into sleep, and the cogon grass continued to wave and tremble, now and then a faint grunt coming from one of the men whose face was freshly lashed with the blades.

They had reached the foot of the fort. Steep walls must be scaled and the sentries killed. Sidney wriggled down the line of soldiers, whispering how to climb, who must go first, what position to take. As the Moros watched the white man go boldly through the horrible grass, they pledged a vow to be as brave.

Up the steep wall they scaled; heavy ropes of bejuco vines had been placed to tangle any lurking enemy. Twisting the strong tendons in their hands, the soldiers managed to work their way up inch by inch.

Wasso heard them coming. Wasso had grown old in the service of the radjamunda's father. He roused the fort, the slaves. Word spread like fire throughout the estate. The Americans had come! The childish sultan, whimpering in his apartment, was oblivious of what was going on. He kept repeating Moro jingles and saying simple prayers to Allah about reserving a place for him in the seventh heaven.

The first of the soldiers that leaped over the wall fell back like a dead tree limb. And the next, and the next; their bodies tumbled down the steep embankment, hitting the climbing men and stunning them with the unexpected blow. Then the first sentry of the radjamunda fell, his spear running through his opponent's shoulder as he did so.

And as the slaves rushed into the fort, slaughter followed—mad, insane loss of life.

"This—is this is civilizing the Moros!" Sidney muttered, as he forged ahead. "And—and in Leyte they send 'em to school and teach 'em basket work. What would Caldwell do if he were mixed up—in—this?"

Where was the radjamunda? Sidney threw mutilated bodies out of his way as he made for the main entrance. The radjamunda, the splendid, twenty-year-old crown prince, who defied the government without pause; the big, handsome, brown chap who was to marry Tanguila the following week?

Sidney crouched in the entrance, a guard of four soldiers protecting him. He could see through the long, low hall into the palace; he could smell the cooking carabao that had been started for the breakfast. Down the hall he crept, his soldiers close beside him. Behind was the fighting, the ghastly massacre; yet no radjamunda, no brave crown prince leading his slaves. Was he—a coward?

In the women's quarters he heard the low mourning chant being sung, the rustle of heavy silks, the frightened clash of silver bracelets as plump brown arms clasped appealingly in prayer.

Sidney kept on his hunt. The radjamunda—he must find the radjamunda! He passed the sultan's apartment—a creese found its way mysteriously into the heart of one of his four soldiers. Another of the guard fell, and another; and still the white man and his sole protector pursued their game.

As he turned into another courtyard, a thud from behind told him that his last man had dropped, that he must face the radjamunda alone. The clang of swords, the swish of bullets echoed faintly down the passage; agonized yells, frantic calls for help, loud, triumphant cheers of victory clashed discordantly in his ears.

A heavy door swayed, and the young radjamunda's voice was heard, pleading madly to be set free.

Sidney halted. The angered boy was saying:

"I tell thee, I shall strike if thou keep me longer. Allah, have mercy—that a woman would keep me from the fight! I tell thee, thou wilt be buried with a pig if thou keep me longer. Allah have mercy, have mercy! Strike her dead before I lift my sword to her!"

Sidney battered the door back. In a low-ceilinged, richly furnished room sat the crown prince—the proud radjamunda—his arms bound securely with heavy cords, his feet tangled with silver chains. Beside him, wailing, praying, entreating, knelt his mother—the queen mother—the sultan's first wife.

"Thou shalt not go! Thou wilt die; thou must live, must live for the glory of thy people," she was saying. "My son, my first born, I cannot let you go. I am no coward; let them take me, a woman without soul—but not my first born!"

The radjamunda, baffled, desperate, insane with longing, glanced up, to meet Sidney's mocking eyes—the eyes of a warrior, which spelled the words: "A woman keeps thee! Coward!"

With a stupendous effort, he wrenched his arms partially free, while the Moro queen knelt at Sidney's feet to beg for her son's life.

"I am his mother," she told him, in a quivering, weary voice. "He is my first born. Oh, white man, who hast a mother somewhere in Allah's sphere, think of her; think of what I have dared to do! Moro women die for less than this—much, much less! But something in my mother heart was paralyzed when my son came to bid me farewell. He came to bid me farewell before he went into battle. How many Mohammedian sons would do as much? Think of thy mother, white man, remember her—spare my son!"

Avoiding the glaring fire in the radjamunda's eyes, as his one free hand reached for his creese and raised it in the direction of the woman, Sidney drew the trembling figure of the queen into safety and signaled the radjamunda to pause. A film passed before his eyes—a peculiar sensation, as often comes to men in moments of great peril.

Once when he was about to strike a schoolboy with a knife, his insane rage had been stayed and repressed by such a film. Another time, crossing the ocean, the ship was wrecked, and Sidney thought he would die before morning.

The same film had passed before him, clear and distinct as a set of moving pictures. First of all, he saw himself a tiny boy, his mother teaching him to read; then he watched her bind up a cut hand that he had snagged with a fishhook. The drops of blood dripped down and stained her fresh dress, yet she did not scold. He saw her waving good-by when he went to college—she was older now, and gray dulled the gold in her curly hair. He saw her welcoming him home, the golden hair quite gray, and tender wrinkles about the deep-blue eyes. He saw her feeble, fading, ill. He could feel the subtle mother-touch of her thin hand as he held it the last evening. Then the simple, stoical beauty of a New England graveyard followed. The old-style graveyard, where a crazy wooden fence incloses the ground, and many of the headstones are weather-beaten and the verses hard to read. The film ended abruptly.

Looking down into the dark, passionate eyes of the prematurely aged Moro woman, Sidney saw a strange resemblance to the dead New England mother, whose blue eyes smiled until the end.

"I shall not kill thy son," he told her. "Release him."

The torrent of gratitude was ignored by the two men. As the radjamunda sprang from his chair, disgraced, angered, Sidney held out his hand, as he would have done to an old acquaintance.

"Friends?" he asked simply. "Can we not be friends?"

The anger died from the brown face, the eyes changed to a grateful, bewildered expression, the cruel sword was lowered, and the contemptuous gesture toward the Moro mother was checked.

Speaking in Arabic, the radjamunda said slowly:

"Thou art a brave man. You might

have killed me without effort. I shall be more than thy friend. See, I make you my brother—my blood brother. We shall fight no more."

Sidney nodded. Blood brother! The nearest, strongest, rarest tie that can unite two such races.

As the Moro mother knelt in thankful prayer, the radjamunda took Sidney's scratched arm, and cut a peculiar mark in the outer skin. Without speaking, Sidney raised the warm, brown arm, and did likewise. Rubbing the two wounds together, speaking Arabic phrases which Sidney did not understand, the radjamunda made the blood flow slowly into the different arms, intermingling.

"Blood brothers! To be kept secret until Allah calls!" The crown prince's voice sounded like a silver bell as he repeated his oath: "If ever I fail thee in what thou ask, I shall eat pig, be buried with a pig, go to heaven with a pig! If ever thou failest me in what I ask, thou shalt eat pig, be buried with a pig, go to heaven with a pig!"

Erect, facing each other with honest, fearless eyes, the blood brothers clasped hands, bade the Moro mother stop weeping, and went forth to end the fight. Once, as Sidney and the radjamunda glanced at each other during their quelling of the battle, the radjamunda formed the word "Brother" in Arabic with his lips. And when the sadly depleted troops were ready for the long homeward hike, together with the radjamunda and his guard, Sidney spoke softly to say:

"If it could have happened first, brother, how much might have been spared."

The radjamunda glanced back at the bloody floors, at the trench piled high with mangled limbs and bodies, and nodded slowly.

With rapt admiration his soldiers watched Sidney lead the march, the crown prince following meekly behind. To think the radjamunda had been captured, had been conquered, won over to the red, white, and blue.

After a crude treaty was signed at the post, and the ravaged troops re-

paired, and Sidney somewhat rested, the radjamunda returned to his estate, returned an American ally, proud of the honor, all eagerness to tell Tanguila, to convince her father that the Americans were high in Allah's favor, and that he must become one with them.

"Blood brother," he whispered to Sidney as they parted. "Blood brother—to the grave."

"To the grave," answered the white man. "Blood brother."

When Caldwell came to the post, and saw Sidney, and heard the report of the expedition, he cross-questioned the lieutenant until Sidney longed to take to the woods and far away.

"But how—how did you ever pull it off, conquer an untamed warrior? Boy, you've done the biggest stroke of work in Mindanao. I can't see how—I don't understand where you got the drop on him."

To which Sidney only answered with an evasive shrug, and a: "Don't make me feel bulgy, captain. Remember, I've got to obey superior officers still." While all the time there danced before his eyes the pleading native mother, the enraged son, the scene of the bloodletting, and the sound of the solemn oath he had repeated rang in his ears. Then he would rub a peculiar scar on his right forearm and smile, while Caldwell shook his head despairingly.

Caldwell went away. Perhaps it was the recent triumph that lessened the sting of being alone; at any rate, Sidney felt glad that the torrent of questions had ceased, that peace reigned in the district, and no expedition was on hand.

Malaco swaggered up the steps with a dispatch. It was written in Arabic, and, as Sidney touched it, he knew whose hand had sealed the message.

Going to his office, he closed the door, tore the paper open, and read:

BLOO BROTHER: So soon must I ask my oath to be redeemed. Shame overwhelms me, yet thou knowest our vow is sacred. My Tanguila, my bride, is to be given in marriage to the dwarf Amai-Sanksta. Her father is angered at my treaty with thy people. Therefore the girl, my betrothed, must suffer. She is disgraced, she is loved

by a false warrior! She is to be sold—she must be saved! I cannot attack her father, they would kill her at once.

Word came from her that she must be taken away without delay. Allah will smile on thee. He will not let thee go unrewarded. Thou knowest I will redeem my pledge—to the edge of the grave. But this, brother, rests in thy merciful hands only. I am helpless, as I was when thou first looked upon me. I have humbled myself to ask the first great favor at thy hands. Do not fail me, do not let harm come to her. Impatiently I wait to kiss thy feet in thankfulness, to hear that she is safe.

THY BROTHER.

Sidney reread the message many times, stroking his right forearm with its telltale scar, and smiling sardonically. Rescue the Princess Tanguila! With impoverished troops, with a fagged leader, with the smallest chance in the world of victory. And he had believed that the blood brother would win over Tanguila's father, that no other wild expedition would be necessary. Redeem his sacred vow!

He crumpled the dispatch in his hand angrily. What could he do? What dare he do? What explanation could he make the post? Why should the life of a native princess be paramount? Why should he egg his men on to lay down their lives in order that a Moro wedding might take place? It was impossible, quixotic folly.

He paced up and down the floor, turning abruptly as he reached either end, pausing now and then for a drink of gin, setting his teeth together with a sharp click. The radjamunda had called his hand, he had demanded his oath to be redeemed. If Sidney failed—if he dared to fail, it would mean ruin, destruction of the post, another slaughter. His bravery in the last expedition had been commended; Caldwell had spoken seriously of a decoration to be given him. Which would be timely if the radjamunda found out he had lied, that their secret oath was only a trick of war.

Presently he recalled Tanguila in her bethrothal gown as he had seen her driving through the valley with her attendants; he had noted the glad look in her brown eyes, he heard her merry laugh as she listened to her women sing their

native song of love. The dwarf Amai-Sankaksta was ugly, black, crippled. He was old and cruel, toothless, and with palsied, hideous claws for hands. He tortured his women slaves for a pastime, so one story ran.

Then the radjamunda's face came to him, the radjamunda's mother's face, the weird scene of the bloodletting in the queen's apartments. The tiny scar on his arm throbbed and burned. "Thou shalt eat pig, be buried with a pig, go to heaven with a pig!" He had repeated those words. He had clasped hands with the crown prince as man to man. Something higher, stronger, more powerful than his soldier's duty was at stake. His honor was in the balance. The strange sense of honor that can exist only between two strong men, the sense of honor that causes such men to die smiling before they will stoop and smirch it with neglect.

Had he appealed to the radjamunda for aid, his word would have been obeyed without question. Yet he parried, and doubted, and argued with himself, dragged forth lukewarm patriotism to shield him from keeping his word. The princess must be saved. She must be saved without the post knowing, without fighting, without delay.

In a flash Sidney saw his way. It was as clear as though the radjamunda stood beside him, telling him what to do. He sat down at the writing table to answer the message. Yes, there wasn't a chance of his being caught. It would take so many hours for the radjamunda to receive his answer, so many more for him to—

Sidney signed "Brother," and called the messenger. He glanced at the calendar as he did so. No, Caldwell would not be back for a week. By that time Tanguila would be safe in Hongkong until the radjamunda and the government could conquer her father, and then send for her. Caldwell need not know.

Early the next morning, Caldwell returned unexpectedly, accompanied by Major Bruce. They asked for Sidney, but no one knew where he was.

Half an hour later Sidney appeared at the comandancia, shook hands in a nervous, restless manner, and told them that domestic trouble in the barrio had made him pile out early to act as peacemaker. The excited, tense look in his eyes made Caldwell wonder if he drank heavily.

"You've had breakfast?" Sidney asked, trying to keep his lower lip from trembling.

"Yes; we've only got enough real business to keep us occupied about ten minutes," Caldwell answered. "Come inside, Sidney, and get out the funds. The major is going to take his share for the camp back with him. When did you say pay day was?"

Sidney did not answer. He stood staring at them aimlessly, trying to laugh.

"You're drunk!" exploded the major pettishly. "You ought to be in the guardhouse like any trooper. When you drink, drink like a gentleman!"

But Caldwell knew it was not liquor that clouded his brain. He pushed him inside, into the office, the room where the small safe stood. He had left twenty-five hundred dollars in that safe, government funds, to be used to pay off the various posts for the month. Twenty-five hundred dollars—fifty hundred pesos. He left them in charge of Sidney, expecting to return at the end of the week and act as paymaster. Caldwell would have staked his last dollar that the safe was empty.

He shut the door, and walked over to the iron chest.

"What's the combination?" he asked abruptly.

"He's drunk," reiterated the major grimly.

"What is the combination?" demanded Caldwell.

Sidney threw himself on the floor, his head buried in his arms. He sobbed like a child, sobbed wildly, until Caldwell and the major lifted him by force, and put him in a steamer chair—his hands tied securely behind him.

"See here, captain," began the major. "I think we ought to call in—"

Caldwell waved him aside.

"How much have you stolen?" he asked, emphasizing the last word.

"Every cent," Sidney answered, in a lifeless tone, his eyes closed. "Every cent you put in there, Captain Caldwell."

The major's gasp of anger was ignored.

"Why did you do it?" asked the captain quietly. "What did you use that much money for, Sidney?"

The younger man writhed in his chair.

"I don't know," he said.

"He's insane, crazed with the sun," began the major explosively.

"Don't lie!" Caldwell ordered. "I want the truth. What did you do with that money? You know what this means—instant dismissal from the service, prison, disgrace—all the rest of the melodrama frills. Tell me the truth! What did you do with that money?"

"I don't know," breathed Sidney, as if he were in bad pain. "Captain Caldwell, I—don't—know."

"Sidney a liar!" The veins stood out on the major's forehead. "Who can we believe in now? Sidney, the man that we staked our life on, we—" The major's anger changed to grief, disappointment.

"I'm not going to ask you many more times, Sidney," Caldwell repeated harshly. "And you won't be urged to tell the truth in as gentle a manner again. You know that. What did you do with the money? Answer me."

Sidney opened his eyes to stare at Caldwell's set face.

"I don't know," he wailed. "I—I can't remember—I gambled—"

"With whom? What did you play? When? How much did you lose?"

"I don't know," the boy sobbed. "I think it was poker, last night—then I drank bino—and other things. I met a French Jew peddler, and he—he—Captain, I don't remember. I gave some away to the natives, I lost some, they stole some. I was crazy. I don't know why I did it. I don't remember—my head—my head—" His voice was as shrill as a hysterical woman's.

"He's lying," insisted the major, his anger reappearing. "He's just lying."

"Did you realize what it would mean?" Caldwell questioned gravely.

"I thought—yes, I thought it all out," the boy told him eagerly. "I thought it could be put back without any one knowing. In just a little while. Then you came back unexpectedly, and you wanted—"

"Where would you get that amount in a little while? Answer that."

Sidney caught his lower lip, and bit it until a trickle of blood was visible.

"I don't know," he faltered. "I—didn't—think."

"Aren't you well, Sidney?"

Caldwell kept the major's torrent of abuse back with his uplifted hand.

"No; maybe I've gone loco, maybe, I don't know—I didn't think—I guess that's all there is to it. I did think, and I didn't think. I can't explain. The money was going to be there all right when you came back, in a week, I tell you—in less than that. God, my head is splitting! A thief, a soldier-thief! Captain, I've always done my duty. Ask the Powers, look at my records! I've always tried. I don't know what to say—you see the raj—the—he didn't know I'd need money—he thought I'd fight. Don't pay any attention to what I said—I was raving. There wasn't any one else in this thing except me. I'm insane—" The hysterical sobs commenced again.

Caldwell helped the boy stand up.

"Go in and lie down, Sidney," he said kindly. "I'll leave your hands tied. Men in a frenzy such as you are often kill themselves. And that is foolish." He jabbed a needle into the quivering arm. "You'll sleep now. Then we'll take down an accurate, coherent statement. You'll be in better trim."

After the boy was stretched out on the cot, Caldwell came back to the office, where he found the major on his knees, trying to open the safe.

"What's the use of that?" he asked. "Have you any doubts on the matter?"

"No, no; of course not," fussed the major. "Only I thought we might find a—find a clew, you know. Isn't it hor-

rrible? Isn't it sickening? As I said before, who can we believe in now—who dare we believe in? Why, Sidney was of sterling rank; we swore by him; he did the finest, bravest work a man of his age ever thought of attempting. I told you about it once—remember? Look at his capturing and conquering the radjamunda! The shock of it, the pity of it! The shame of it!" The little major's voice choked as he finished.

Presently Caldwell said:

"Suppose we were to shield him this time. Wait, don't row till I explain. I simply said—suppose. Now, listen to me. I believe Sidney. I think he cannot account for the money. I think he was irresponsible, temporarily insane."

"But, but—" blustered the major.

"Just it. *But*. Why was he irresponsible? Because"—here Caldwell's voice sank to an earnest whisper as he faced the major appealingly—"because that boy had been alone in this hell hole for four years; because he has exhausted every bit of moral force one human being is given in trying to conquer these people. Did it never occur to you that when fine, strong people are found to be thieves or criminals that they may have committed such acts in a moment of frenzy, at a time when their power of resistance was so weakened by constant contact with crippled, abnormal natures that no strength was left them with which to withstand temptation?

"If Sidney had given his blood to a dying officer, we would laud him, crown him with laurel, and excuse physical weakness and incapability. I tell you, Sidney has given his moral force, his ethical, high-minded ideals, to these people, to his subordinate officers; he has rendered himself barren of the power to check criminal tendencies. God, Major Bruce, Sidney isn't a thief—he's a moral pauper!"

"That's all very well for a college theme," snapped the major. "But there are twenty-five hundred dollars to be made good by to-night, or—"

"Will you give him a chance?" Caldwell pleaded. "If I make good that money in a few hours, will you keep silent? Will you help send the boy away

from this cesspool of unmorality—not immorality, major, mark the difference? Will you accept my theory, even though you do not believe? Will you do this for me?"

The little major's face quivered. Something in Caldwell's passionate tone touched his usually sluggish heart.

"You are a good man, Frank Caldwell," was all he said. "And I will keep silent."

Taking two native messengers with him, Caldwell stalked into the barrio, through the narrow, filthy streets to the big Chinese shop—the only place in such a barrio where money was to be had.

Wung Li, the proprietor, was all smiles. He would show the heaven-born anything his heart desired. He would—

"Inside," Caldwell told him. "Alone."

As the two went into the stuffy back room, thick with recent opium fumes, Caldwell told him he must borrow money—much money—fifty hundred pesos.

"Impossible, me can no do—important cargo just shipped to Hongkong—very important cargo." A gleam of amusement came into the slanting eyes as he spoke of the cargo.

"Yes, I saw the boat sailing this morning. But that does not change matters. I must have money."

"Me can no do." And the Chinaman shrugged his shoulders carelessly.

Caldwell raised the third finger of his right hand, the finger wearing the heavy silver ring. He beckoned the plump Celestial with a significant signal.

"Me can do," panted Wung Li. "Me can—glad do."

As the plump figure left the back room, to dive into one still more hidden, Caldwell relaxed. He patted the ring caressingly.

"Now, major," he whispered, "tell me that beaten biscuit are all this is good for."

But Caldwell was not prepared for what followed. The Chinaman lugged bags before him—government bags, unopened, containing the money Sidney had confiscated!

Caldwell gasped, lifted the ring again, gave the second set of signals. "When—did the officer bring this—for what—for what—"

Obediently the other answered:

"The Hongkong cargo—the Princess Tanguila."

"What did you do?" Caldwell's voice trembled with excitement.

"Take wedding silks to the princess to see. Bundle her in a roll of silk, silk she pretend to no like. Hurry her away—at night. Set her in the boat early in the morning. Sail her safe from her father. Radjamunda want to marry her. Father no like radjamunda. Radjamunda an American. Father hate Americans. Radjamunda make officer save his woman. I do for money, for much money that officer give. Officer hide here all night—protect her—I risk much—velly much—but money big—" Wung Li bowed respectfully.

Without answering, Caldwell told the men to take the bags to the comandancia, to be sure that no one saw them enter the office, and to keep silent.

"By this ring I pay you within a week," he satisfied the Chinaman.

"Brother," whispered Wung Li, as Caldwell passed out, and Caldwell, not understanding, but cognizant that some sacred word had been spoken, smiled, and clasped the yellow hand.

Back in the comandancia, Caldwell ransacked the boy's belongings until he found the safe combination. He opened the iron door, and packed the money in carefully, just as he had left it. Then he said a semi-soldier, semi-Christian prayer of thanksgiving. For Caldwell mistrusted the major's capacity for understanding theories.

Caldwell went in to Sidney, and roused him. Sidney, dreaming chaotic things, such as the radjamunda breaking his oath and killing Caldwell, of the marriage of Tanguila to the dwarf, sat up in bed and whimpered.

"Listen," whispered Caldwell. "The money is back there—in the safe. The identical money you gave to Wung Li. He told me all. Don't speak till I'm through. I found the combination in your diary, that's how I put it back.

The major doesn't know. I want you to lie like a gentleman, Sidney—say it was the sun that put you on the blink. See what I'm going to do? I'm going to waltz you in there, and waltz the major in there, and have the safe opened before we take down your statement about the stealing. When he sees the money, he'll be paralyzed. So'll you. You must pretend you have suddenly recovered your senses, and everything will be lovely. It was a hallucination on your part, a nightmare, a delusion resulting from the last expedition—you were quite positive you had stolen government funds. Then the major will lick your boots for joy, and all the officers' wives at the post will invite you to tea when they hear the major's version. It is better that way than the other—much better."

"What other?" The boy was dimly realizing his salvation.

"Oh, another way I figured out to save you. It was pretty wordy. This is what I call real stuff. Are you good on the pretend, Sidney?"

The boy gripped his arm.

"What did the yellow devil tell?" he muttered. "I'll kill him. He broke faith with me—he broke faith. I gave him his price, and—"

"S-sh!" soothed Caldwell. "First of all, will the money be back in a week? I'm responsible to pay Wung Li. Will the radjamunda send it? Good Lord, kid, you've got to tell me that much!"

"The radjamunda will send it," Sidney answered stoically. "I suppose Wung Li told you he took Tanguila from her father's house in the night, and sent her to Hongkong until the radjamunda can send for her safely. Her father was to sell her to a dwarf—and I—I promised our ally to save her. He didn't know I'd need money; he thought I'd fight or arbitrate, but I knew that was no use—it was a tight place, and it was the only way I saw—" His head drooped wearily, as he murmured: "How did you force Wung Li to tell? How did you make him give up that much?"

Caldwell caressed the boy's tousled head.

"Through the oldest way in the world," he said simply. "Through fraternity!"

He flashed the silver ring before Sidney as he spoke.

Impulsively the boy lifted the scarred arm to Caldwell's gaze, and smiled.

"Quits!" was all he said.

Then Caldwell knew why the radjamunda was the American's ally, why Sidney had risked his citizenship to save the radjamunda's betrothed.

Of course, the major had a semi-seizure when the safe was opened. Sidney acted his part well. And within the week came the blood brother's letter with the money, and presents of fine silver and gold. Also word of Tanguila safe from the black dwarf's arms.

The only thing the major never understood or quite forgave was Caldwell's making Sidney keep his high-binder Chinese ring. It had worked such miracles with the cook at the major's camp.

"He doesn't appreciate it," begged the major, but Caldwell grinned in stubborn silence.

"Keep this," he had said to Sidney, on leaving. "It will put a seal on Wung Li's tongue. You need it more than I."

As Sidney slipped it on his finger, he looked at Caldwell with boyish adoration.

"Say, captain, why—why—" Here he stumbled badly. "Why did you do all that for me—all that, you know? It was great of you, it was white. I would have been behind the bars by now if you had been any different. And you understand, you didn't nag, you just covered up traces, and blinded the major."

Caldwell smiled.

"Think it over, Sidney," he answered, "and see if you don't agree with me. If you did that much for the radjamunda, because of a few drops of alien blood in your young arm, and a stirring, dramatic oath; if Wung Li would do what he did because of the power of a silver ring—don't you think, boy, I would play my part in the riddle for you—my white brother?"



# WITHOUT LEGAL AID.

By Frank Condon

**S**OME day some very wise old man will write a tract, and, if he is very rich and benevolent in addition to being very wise, he will print several million of his tracts on thin, white paper, and in large type, with curlicues down the edges of the pages, and he will distribute the million among a large and important section of our population—which is, people who are married to each other.

On the first inside page, directly after the important imprint of the job printer, who has contracted for the job at ten and one-eighth cents per copy—thereby making one hundred and nineteen per cent profit, which he denies vehemently—will appear the prologue and the general introduction, stating clearly the object of the booklet, which will be that married people, and, in particular, married people who are going over the first round of hurdles, and who are finding that the brushes have stickers on them, and that the water jumps are broad and discouraging, should try——But why continue?

“Tract” has a dry, uninteresting sound to it; but, on the other hand, traction has not. Therefore, let us look upon traction with a seeking eye; and forthwith we come across Billy Lockwood and the subway.

The subway is a long, dark, noisy hole in which New York rides to work, and it is responsible for the invention of the familiar time clock in business offices.

Billy Lockwood was part of the subway. He was commander-in-chief of

the ticket-sellers’ brigade, and, on occasions, he rode about in a casual way, and figured up long columns in the thick cash books, and compared the answers with the nickels in the subway till.

Billy was twenty-seven, and for four years he had omitted such ceremonials as billiards, pool, poker, waiting at the s. d. e., taxicabs, bowling, pinochle à la lager, and various other activities.

In few words, Mr. Lockwood was married—sincerely and steadfastly married, and in that permanent state of matrimony that entails carpet slippers, a pipe rack, razor-honing, vegetable-buying, and a ticket in the circulating library where the newest fiction is disseminated at one cent per day.

The one who answered the doorbell in the Lockwood flat on Thirty-seventh Street was a peaceful, smiling little lady with blue eyes and light hair; and, before Billy swooped down upon her and carried her off to the dominie, she was plain Nell Jarvie, of the Murray Hill Jarvies. There had been four girls in the family, and stout ladies in blue wrappers on East Thirty-second Street often remarked that hustling Billy Lockwood could have picked from the bunch, bless his curly black head!

During the four years, the census man had come once to the five-room apartment on Thirty-seventh Street, and he had gone away with but two names and a thoughtful frown.

Toward the end of their third year, a death in the Lockwood family started something like four hundred dollars in Billy’s direction, and Nell passed a supreme-court decision concerning it.

"We've been trying to lay aside a little nest egg," she said to William, "and whenever you've started toward the bank, you've met the landlord on the stairs with the next month's receipt in his hand. What I say is this: Pay a whole year's rent in advance with this money, and then we'll put the rent in the bank each pay day, and maybe a little more. It's the habit of going into a savings bank that gets a person interested."

"There may be something in that," Billy agreed. "And, if I pay the skinflint all that rent money in advance, he'll have to hand me a discount."

"Of course," Nell said, "you can get a new suit out of it, and maybe there'll be enough left over to get me a new fall hat."

Thereupon, the transaction was officially placed upon the minutes, and the money was paid with fitting solemnity, and with some risk to the *Shylock* who collected the rents, and whose heart had been bad for years.

For six months, Billy and Nell trotted along amiably, in double harness, the same as usual, and failed to notice that, instead of pulling directly forward, and forward only, there was a distinct lateral motion to their teamwork. Billy came upon the realization, and pondered over it with a troubled mind, first refusing to believe it altogether, and later on regarding it as an unquestioned condition that needed instant changing.

He noticed that the old spirit of good-fellowship that had always been between Nell and him was dying away. It was monstrous even to think of it, but the undeniable fact was before him. The two meals each day that had previously meant so much enjoyment to both of them were slowly changing to mere silent feeding functions.

In the morning, Billy read the newspaper, and sipped his coffee; in the evening, he sat down, tired and hungry, and devoted his attention to the dinner. If he spoke to Nell, it seemed to him that she replied abruptly and with petulance.

Formerly Nell had met him at the front door, warned of his coming by the

tinkle from the street bell, and the wifely kiss was given and taken. Now she contented herself with leaving the door ajar for him and returning to her work in the kitchen.

They no longer laughed and joked about utterly foolish subjects. He no longer dropped on his knees beside the parlor couch to fondle Nell's hair as she lay dozing or trying to read. She had ceased her playful habit of stopping behind his chair and locking her arms under Billy's chin. And a short "Good-by, Nell," and "Hello, Nell!" had completely usurped the custom of kissing each other.

Nell said nothing. She continued her household duties mechanically, and there was neither reproach nor inquiry in her conversation. Billy ate his meals in moody silence, turned to the papers, dozed a while, and went to bed.

One evening, after the dishes had been taken from the table and Nell sat sewing, Billy looked across at her, and said:

"There's something wrong, Nell."

She continued sewing, and made no reply.

"I've done a great deal of thinking lately," he went on slowly, "and things are beginning to look bad for you and me. You've seen, as well as I have, that a change has come over us. We're not the same to each other as we used to be. We're not the Nell and Billy we were a year ago; and, while we haven't had any battles around the place, it's pretty plain that we're going downhill, and going fast. Sometimes I've wished we might have slugged each other. It might have roused us up."

"There isn't any sense in trying to dodge the thing," he went on, after a pause. "We can't go ahead living this way. There isn't enough love in this flat to fill the saltcellar. I can see it plainly enough, and so can you. We aren't exactly repulsive to each other; but, on the other hand, the old affection we had is completely gone. How long, for instance, is it since you kissed me? A month, perhaps. Anyway, it's so long ago that I've forgotten it. You have the same complaint to make of me,

I don't feel like kissing you any more. I don't want to. All I realize is that you are my wife, and this is my home, and I've got to be here. We can't afford to ruin both of our lives by keeping up this kind of farce. We're both young, and it's too long and too weary an outlook."

He ceased speaking, and stared gloomily at the ceiling. Nell put down her sewing, and turned to him unsmilingly.

"Maybe you're right about it, Billy," she said. "I've noticed everything you mention, but I've been waiting; I've been hoping for a change for the better."

"It won't come," he interrupted. "It can't come because we've made a mistake. We're not suited for each other. If we were, we wouldn't act as we have acted. We don't love each other any more, and we're fools if we try to make ourselves believe that we do."

"What can we do about it?" she asked quietly. "We're married."

"We can do what all sensible people do when they find out that they're not mated right. We can separate."

Nell flinched at the word, but her face was smiling.

"Not a divorce?" she said.

"No, not a divorce. That won't be necessary; at least for a time. But we can quit this ghastly farce. We won't have any lawyers mixing in, and we won't have any formality. We've discovered that we can't get on together, so we'll get on separately. You can go back to your sisters; and I'll pack up and find a couple of rooms somewhere.

"It's perfectly simple and easy. We won't see each other, and we won't put up any bluff. I'll continue sending you your regular share of my salary, the same as though we hadn't split, and you can live on that until—until something else happens. If you come across a man you like, and if you decide that you like him well enough to marry him, all you do is to let me know. Then we'll have to get a divorce. You can get it, and I'll play the guilty party, so that there won't be any trouble. On the other hand, if I want to marry again, I'll tell you so,

and we'll be divorced without any particular fuss."

"Are you—are you determined to do this?" she asked, scarcely above a whisper.

"I'm not determined about anything, except that we can't go on this way. There's no bad feeling between us. We are simply getting out of an unbearable condition, and you'll have to admit yourself that it's for the best. Surely you don't want to live this way, if we don't love each other, do you?"

She shook her head.

"If you think it's the right thing to do, of course I haven't anything to say. You've generally been right, you know," she added, with a smile. "What shall we do with the flat and the furniture?"

"For a time, nothing. The rent has been paid until the end of the year. The furniture is yours to do with as you choose. It's the cheapest plan to leave everything just as it is until our lease runs out. Then you can put it in storage, if you like, or, if you've decided to get married again, you'll have it to start with."

"When shall we—when shall we leave?" Nell asked.

"This is Thursday. I think the sooner we get it over with the better. Let's bring everything to an end on Saturday. It happens to be pay day, so we can both start off with a little money. If you ever need anything, at any time, your first call is on me."

The decision, once arrived at, wrought an immediate change. For the two days remaining, both Nell and Billy laughed and talked; but there was a deep-seated constraint that deceived neither of them. On Saturday afternoon, an express wagon called for Billy's trunk. He left Nell standing in the doorway, waiting for the arrival of the vehicle that was to carry off her own belongings.

"Thank God, I had enough will power!" he said. "It was the only thing to do."

Billy found two rooms in a lodging house on the West Side; very clean, airy rooms, with a view over the Hudson River. And he settled in them with

a determination to enjoy life as he had not enjoyed it before.

He hunted up the companions of his bachelor days, and found their ranks sadly depleted. He frequented the old resorts, and plunged into various harmless gayeties in the firm belief that he was enjoying himself. He went to the theaters immoderately, bought stacks of new books and magazines, played pool with utter strangers when he could find none of his friends, went to dances, and called upon his married friends upon the slightest provocation.

Three weeks turned into the past and Billy sent Nell a check. It had never occurred to him to call at the Jarvie home. If anything went wrong, Nell would certainly inform him at once.

In the fourth week, he began to feel the first pinches of discontent. The two furnished rooms seemed cold and inhospitable. He found fault with the service in the restaurants he frequented. His work in the subway commenced to irritate him, and his temper sheered off badly.

One week it rained perpetually, dismally, discouragingly. The rain teemed from the overcast skies, cold and penetrating, and life began to look like one enormous funeral procession.

On Saturday afternoon, Billy left the subway an hour or two ahead of his usual time, and when he stepped out of the kiosk at Ninety-sixth Street, the rain smote him viciously in the face.

"I'm in a beastly frame of mind, all right," he muttered. "I don't suppose I've felt so miserable in my life. I'll walk it off."

He plunged north on Broadway. The streets were deserted, sloppy, and gloomy. For two hours, Billy trudged through the unending rain, and when he pulled up at the northern end of the drive his spirits had not improved. He was wet, and uncomfortable, and a trifle hungry, but the thought of restaurant food annoyed him. He leaned over the railing and glared miserably at the Hudson for half an hour, and then a stray thought flitted into his mind, and took root. His face softened, and the sullen frown smoothed out between his eyes.

"I guess I'll do that," he confided to a distant motor boat. "It sounds somewhat good on an afternoon like this."

An hour later, he was far downtown, walking briskly through Third Avenue. He stopped before a butcher's shop and surveyed the meaty offerings in the window with undisguised approval.

"I want a thick, juicy, tender porterhouse steak, weighing about three pounds," he said to the man in the white apron. "I want the best steak you ever cut off a cow."

This purchased, he proceeded down the street, stopping at fruit shops, delicatessen stores, and groceries, and when he finally turned east, he was laden down like a department-store truck in the holidays.

"Now," he said cheerfully, "I am going to insert into myself one of the swellest little feeds that I've had in some time—to be exact, in about four weeks."

He paused a moment before a familiar entrance on Thirty-seventh Street. Then he walked briskly up the steps, pushed open the outer door, and ascended to the third floor. The old key nosed its way into the lock smoothly, and the door opened upon the little, five-room flat.

It was exactly as he had seen it last, and he heaved a sigh of gratification.

"It's got something on my two rooms, anyhow," he grinned. "Gee, it looks good to me!"

Then he hustled. The little kitchen range sputtered joyously. It seemed to feel that life had again come to the deserted apartment. The rain pattered against the windows; but its gusty attacks brought Billy nothing but sheer pleasure.

"Go on, rain! Rain your head off! What do I care?" he said gayly.

The white tablecloth came out, and the plates and silver. He lighted every gas jet in the flat to induce a general air of cheerfulness, and the odor of the broiling steak smote gratefully in his nostrils.

Such a meal as Billy prepared that night there never was before. The potatoes came out white and soft. The

lettuce and tomatoes pleased his eye and his palate. The tinned pudding was an epicure's dream of heaven; and the coffee arose in steaming, fragrant clouds, and fought for supremacy with the odor of the crisp steak.

At the end of the feast, Billy leaned back in his chair, and beamed about him. He lighted a cigar, hunted up the papers he had brought in with him, and found his old, ragged slippers—cast-offs which he had scorned when he departed.

Then, with the plates about him, the lights glowing cheerfully, the smoke from his cigar curling aloft in dreamy clouds, a key sounded in the door at the end of the abbreviated hall.

Billy jumped to his feet in alarm; and he was standing in the well-known sculptured pose called "Surprise" as Nell pushed open the door, and came in. She stood still for a moment, staring at the miracle before her. Then she smiled, and said:

"Why, hello, Billy!"

"Come in, Nell," he replied haltingly. "This is somewhat surprising, isn't it? In fact, it's a little bit astounding. I just came in to-night to get a bite of decent food. Take off your things."

Nell smiled inscrutably. In her arms were several small packages, and these she disposed of before removing her rain-soaked garments.

"Have you had your dinner?" he asked, in some embarrassment. "I'm afraid I haven't left very much."

She nodded.

"I ate downtown," she said. "What made you come up here, Billy?"

He laughed, and sat down again.

"To tell you the truth, Nell, I've been in a blue funk for the last week. I'm deadly sick of the restaurants, and this afternoon I got to thinking about how good the meals were here before—he-

fore the break. Then I simply went out and bought up a lot of stuff, and came in and cooked it. I did pretty well, too, I might add. What have you been doing?"

"I've been going around some," she replied. "Grace and I have been visiting friends and gadding about like a couple of kids. I expected to hear from you."

"You got the check, didn't you?"

"Yes, I got that, but I thought you might have dropped me a note."

"I knew that you'd let me know if everything wasn't right," he continued. "Have you been pretty happy?"

"Just pretty happy," she replied, smiling. "Have you been happy?"

Billy made no reply for a long time. He pulled at the cigar and gazed at the drifting smoke. Then he arose and laid the cigar on his plate. He walked around the table and stood behind his wife's chair, and his fingers closed softly under her chin. He bent over and tipped her head backward, and his lips rested gently upon hers.

"No," he answered. "I have not been happy—not at all."

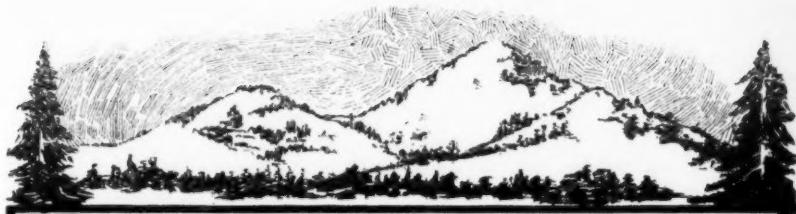
Nell's arms were around his neck, and she began to cry. He picked her up bodily and carried her to the big chair; and, as she wept, he patted her on the cheek, and tried to think of something to say. For half an hour she lay in his arms, and, at the end of that time, he turned her face to his and whispered.

"By the way, Nell," he said ever so gently, "have you been coming up here since—since we made that foolish mistake a month ago?"

Nell looked at Billy curiously, and smiled—a smile of ineffable peace.

"Billy," she said slowly, laying her fingers upon his hand, "I'll tell you the truth. I never went away at all."





# THE PROSPECT HOLE

by GEORGE HYDE PRESTON

**T**HAT beats me!" exclaimed Jim Brett, pulling his dogs up short on the trail. "It's a girl, and she is digging a prospect hole!"

The girl looked up as Brett stopped. Her face was rosy with exercise in the winter air.

"Hello!" she said, with a flash of white teeth. "Stare all you like. It's a free show. You never saw a girl digging a prospect hole, did you?"

"No, I never did," acknowledged Brett, "and I've traveled around in Alaska some, too."

"Well, I am not digging one to hurt," she grimaced, looking down at the feeble beginning.

"You can't make much headway in frozen muck with a pick as dull as that," he said, with a glance at the tool in her hand.

"I don't know how to sharpen it," she returned. "You can't whittle it down like a lead pencil, worse luck!"

"If you've got a hammer in your cabin there, I can fix it in a jiffy. Shall I?"

"I wish you would. I will be much obliged."

She watched him while he heated the steel white hot in the heart of the fire in the Yukon stove, and then drew it down to a slender point with quick blows of the hammer, and tempered it skillfully in a pail of water.

"It's all right now," he announced, "but it will get dull again—and then

what? Digging prospect holes is no work for a girl," he added bluntly. "Ain't there any men around to do it?"

"No," she answered. "Some will be coming along after a while, but not to help me. They are expecting to jump this claim. They don't know that I am on the ground doing the assessment work, or trying to," she added, a little ruefully. "Now, if it were singing."

"You can sing?"

"Can I?" she laughed. "I was Mademoiselle Bettini, lyric queen, on the bill at the Empire in Gold Camp City last week—real name Nora Burke."

"That's fine," said Brett politely. "But can you swing an ax?"

"Never tried," admitted the lyric queen.

"Then how will you cut down trees and split them up for the fires when you get down to gravel? You can't pick frozen gravel."

"I don't know the answer," she said, with a shrug, "but I will somehow. I've just got to. It's up to me."

"Up to you? Why?"

"Because Dick Albers, the owner of this claim, was mighty decent to me once when I needed a friend."

"Why don't he do the work himself?"

"Because he is on a bat, and will stay on it till it is too late."

"Oh, he will, will he?" said Brett, with some disgust. "Then why do you bother about it?"

"He was mighty decent to me once, I tell you," returned the girl petulantly.

"He is a fool about whisky, all right, when he gets started," she went on, "and a couple of men in Gold Camp City have put up a job to keep him full until it is too late for him to do the work, then they will jump the claim. They can do it easy enough, for when Dick gets going he will drink whisky as long as it is handed out to him. I found out their game, but I couldn't find Dick. They have him cached somewhere. I didn't have money enough to hire anybody to do the work—so here I am."

"By thunder, you are the plucky one!" exclaimed Brett admiringly. "Now, look here, I don't want to butt in, and I don't take much interest in booze fighters, but you are up against a proposition that you can't handle. Give me that pick! As sure as my name is Jim Brett, I am going to do the work on this claim for anybody you say, whether he is soured or sober!"

"Do you mean to say that you will take hold of this job for a man you never saw?"

"Well, I've seen you," returned Brett cheerfully, "and it's cruelty to animals to stand by and watch you trying to swing a pick," he grinned.

"And you are really going to help me out," she exclaimed. "My, but I'm glad! My hands are so lame already that I can't shut them. You really are?"

"Just say the word," returned Brett.

"I told you that I hadn't the money to pay with."

"I never said I wanted you to," he laughed, "and anyhow I will take my chance on getting wages out of the ground as I go along. I suppose the claim has something in it, hasn't it?"

The girl shook her head.

"I don't know. Dick said that it has, and it must be so, or Tom Conley and Bill Zane wouldn't be trying to get hold of it."

"Gee! So that's the pair that has framed up the deal!"

"Do you know them?"

"Yes, and they also know me," and Brett smiled as at some recollection. "If they are after the ground, there is something in it. They are slick, all

right. Well, I must turn my dogs loose, and get my tent up."

"Then you really mean it!" exclaimed the girl. "I was afraid that I was dreaming, and that you might walk off and leave me alone with that pick," she added, with a shiver. "It's mighty nice of you, all right."

"Don't mention it, Miss——"

"Mademoiselle Bettini," put in the lyric queen, twinkling.

Brett stuttered.

"Make it Nora, then," said the girl, with a gust of laughter and another flash of white teeth; "that's easier." And she put out her hand like a good comrade.

After Brett had scraped away a place in the snow, and got his tent up, his stove in place, and spruce boughs cut for his bed, he took up the pick.

"I guess I'll keep right along down with the hole she began," he said to himself, sighting up the gulch. "It looks like as good a place as any."

In another minute the frozen muck was flying like brittle glass under his powerful blows.

When the short winter day drew to a close, he walked over to his tent, and, starting the fire, put on his coffeepot.

"Hello," came a hail from the cabin door. "What are you doing?"

"Getting supper."

"Getting supper! What for? That doesn't go while I am around. It is all ready in here. Come over."

In another moment Brett was sitting opposite Nora, with a steaming cup of good coffee at his elbow, and a plate heaped up with smoking food.

"Best supper I ever tasted," he remarked appreciatively.

"Of course you think so; you have been doing your own cooking," returned Nora, her nose in the air.

Brett grinned.

"Cooking is no work for a man," she mimicked.

Brett laughed.

"It sure isn't," he agreed. "You have a pretty good layout here," he added, looking around the cabin.

"Yes; Dick had freighted out all his supplies before those fellows got hold

of him," answered Nora, as she began to clear away the table.

"I'll help wash up," volunteered Brett.

"No, you would only bother me. Take this kettle of warm scraps out to the dogs, and then come back and smoke."

Brett watched the girl as she moved lightly about, putting away the dishes and tidying things up.

"She makes the place look mighty homelike," he murmured to himself contentedly, as he puffed on his pipe.

Almost without his knowing it, she began to sing. It was hardly more than humming at first, that gradually grew deeper and fuller—a plaintive, haunting melody that told of all the things that Brett did not have.

Suddenly the girl paused.

"Do you like it?" she asked.

Brett did not answer. She gave a short laugh.

"Of course, that kind of a song would not go at the Empire, but I thought maybe you would like it. Well, then, how does this suit you?" she demanded.

And, with a toss of her head, she snatched up a guitar, and struck a few blatant chords.

"Now, here is the kind of a song that makes the boys throw money onto the stage."

"Don't!" said Brett suddenly. "That is, I am dead tired," he muttered. "I'm going to bed. Good night."

When Brett knocked off work at noon the next day, he said:

"I ought to get to gravel soon, and then I'll start burning down. I'm kind of anxious to reach bed rock, and see what we find."

"I hope we find it rich, for Dick's sake."

"What's the odds?" snapped Brett. "It will only be that much more for him to drink up."

"Maybe so," said Nora. "But I hope not," she added, half to herself. "Dick is all right when he is let alone."

"This work will be over at the end of the month," said Brett. "Are you going back to the Empire then?"

"I can't," laughed Nora. "I am in bad with the manager because I quit."

"Do you mean to say that you quit to come up here?"

"Yes."

"You must think a lot of Dick."

"I do," she answered quietly. "A lot."

Brett returned to the prospect hole, and struck his pick savagely into the muck.

"I am a fool," he muttered.

That evening Nora took up her guitar.

"You have done a hard day's work," she smiled. "Shall I sing you some of your kind of songs?"

And then, without waiting for his answer, she sang one quaint bit of melody after another, while Brett smoked in silence.

At last she put down the guitar.

"Do you like them?" she asked.

"You know I do," he answered. "They make me think some way of the old valley where I was born back East. Good night, Nora."

"Good night," she said, half absently, and, as Brett turned away, he wondered if she, too, were not thinking of some far-away valley in a country that was not frozen to the bone, and was not covered everywhere with a pallid coat of snow.

The next day Brett reached gravel, and every night after that a shadowy column of smoke and steam rose straight up from the prospect hole, where the covered fire was eating into the frozen vitals of the earth.

One day, after he had shoveled out the thawed gravel, he brought some of it to the cabin.

"I am getting pretty well down now," he said, "so I guess I will pan this, and see what we find."

Nora looked on with absorbed interest while the process went forward.

Suddenly she exclaimed: "There is something! What is that?"

"A color, and a good one, too," answered Brett. "And there's another," he added, as he washed the last of the sediment out of the pan. "That looks all right for there being good pay down closer to bed rock. I guess I'll make wages, after all," he grinned up at her.

"Let's get another pan of gravel before it freezes," she exclaimed.

"All right," laughed Brett, and they went out to the prospect hole, Nora running ahead like an excited child.

"Hello!" said Brett suddenly, as he took up his shovel. "Who's that coming up the trail with a dog team? Why, that's——"

"Tom Conley and Bill Zane!" cut in Nora.

"Sure it is," cried Brett. "Now, ain't this rich?" he chuckled. "I'm glad we came out when we did. We are just in time to show 'em a busy scene of honest toil, where they was expecting to see untrodden snow and a drift up against the cabin door."

"Why are they coming up here so soon, the beasts?" scorned Nora. "They couldn't jump the claim, even if there were no one working here, till the end of the month."

"Can't say," growled Brett. "They are liable to do anything. Hello, boys," he called out to the pair, who were now within hailing distance. "Welcome to our city!" he grinned maliciously, with a wave toward the cabin and the tent. "How are you, Conley? Hello, Bill Zane! Why, I ain't seen you boys since that time up at Circle. Maybe you remember about it. Where are you bound for now?"

"We're going to do the assessment work on Dick Albers' claim," returned the shorter of the pair curtly.

"You are just a mite too late, Conley," grinned Brett. "I am engaged in that identical occupation at this identical time. See that prospect hole?"

"Where's your authority?" demanded Conley.

"Where's yours?" snapped Brett.

"Right here!" And Conley took a paper from his pocket, and held it out so that Brett could read:

I, Dick Albers, employ Tom Conley and Bill Zane to do the assessment work on my claim, No. 7 Moose Creek, and they are to have two-thirds of the claim when they have done it.

DICK ALBERS.

Witness:

BUCK LANE.

SAM ORTON.

"Is that Albers' signature?" asked Brett, turning to Nora.

She nodded without speaking.

"Well, I guess that's about all for you," said Conley, with an unpleasant smile. "Come on into the cabin, Bill."

Brett's eyes narrowed.

"There is nothing in the agreement about a cabin," he declared, "and that cabin is occupied by this lady."

"Aw, git out! Don't we own two-thirds of the claim?" blustered Conley.

"Not till you have done the work on it, anyhow, and if you put a foot inside of that cabin there will be a couple less tinhorn sports in Alaska than there is now. You know me."

"Come on, Tom," interposed Zane. "We can go into that empty cabin of Thompson's on the claim below. He has finished his assessment work, and left. We don't want no row."

"That's right, Zane, you don't," said Brett contemptuously. "You are known to be mighty cautious when it comes to risking your skin."

Conley turned away, scowling, and followed Zane.

Brett watched them go down the trail, and swore softly to himself.

"Nice pair of cowardly coyotes," he ejaculated.

Then he turned to Nora. She was crying.

"After all the work that you have done, to have them come along and——"

"There, there, don't cry," said Brett. "We'll beat them somehow, yet. Of course, they got him to sign the paper when he was drunk, or by some kind of fake, but there is his signature, and on the face of it they have got the right to do the work."

"Isn't there anything that we can do?"

"Yes; there is. In the first place, I am going to stay right here, and make them work like the devil. They don't know anything about work, except working suckers. They thought they were coming up here, and loaf the right number of days, and go back. They ain't. I'll see to it that they comply with the law fully—mighty fully. I'll wear them to a frazzle."

Nora clapped her hands.

"And I will stay and see the fun—and see that they do not use Dick's cabin, or any of Dick's things."

"Bully for you!" exclaimed Brett. He was suddenly in the highest spirits.

"Since you are going to see the thing through," he went on, "there is something that you can do that may help Albers."

"What is that?"

"You can be the witness when I jump his claim."

"Jump his claim!"

"Yes. If they forced the agreement out of him, or got it by some kind of fraud, it wouldn't be any good, and the work wouldn't count. Anyhow, I am going to jump the claim at midnight on the last day of the month, when the time is up, and put Albers in shape to make a fight for it. It will be a hard game to buck, with those two fellows and their witnesses swearing against him, but it is the only living show that I can see."

"Jim, you are a brick!" cried Nora. "Dick and I will be everlastingly thankful."

"I ain't caring much about Dick's thanks," returned Brett, with sudden gruffness.

When Conley and Zane came up the trail again an hour later, they were carrying picks and shovels.

"Oh, my!" gibed Brett. "See the nice new tools, right out of the store. Too bad to get them all dirty, ain't it, boys?"

The two men sullenly began to clear away a place close by Brett's prospect hole.

"Time is up on the thirty-first, Conley," he said suavely, "and this is the middle of the month. How are you figuring to get the full number of days work in?"

"There will be two of us working," snapped Conley.

"Oh, so that's the way of it," grinned Brett. "Well, you can bet it will be real work, all right. I'll stay, and see to that. If you try to soldier I'll file an affidavit with the recorder that the work wasn't done. Now, buck in!"

Day after day Brett stood over them

like a slave driver, till they, unused to labor, grew lame and sore almost beyond bearing, and yet afraid to rest for a single day. They cursed deeply and darkly, but they worked.

"I ain't had so much fun since I was a kid," chuckled Brett, as he and Nora watched them move stiffly down the trail one evening. "I'm the only living man who ever saw those two fellows work."

"I am afraid of something happening," said Nora, with a shiver. "They look as if they would like to kill you."

"What, those two coyotes!" scoffed Brett. "Would you care if they did?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes," she nodded.

"You really would?"

"Of course. If anything happened to you, who would jump the claim?" she asked, as she stopped at the cabin door.

Brett frowned, and stalked away to his tent without a word.

"I really would care," floated after him from the cabin.

He turned, and caught a glimpse of a mocking face as the door closed.

One afternoon, Nora spied a flock of ptarmigan in the underbrush.

"My, but I wish we had a couple!" she exclaimed..

Brett took his gun, and stalked them up the side of the gulch. He returned in a little while, but without any birds.

"They got away, did they?" asked Nora, in a disappointed tone.

"Yes," answered Brett, with a chuckle, "but I am not laying it up against them."

The next day was the thirty-first, and when they quit work Conley and Zane did not go down the trail as usual, but turned toward the cabin.

"Well, what do you want?" demanded Brett, who was chopping wood in front of his tent.

"We've done the assessment work on this claim, and we own two-thirds of it now, and two-thirds of this 'ere cabin, too," said Conley, with an ugly look, "and we're going to—"

"Oh, no, you ain't," cut in Brett, stepping forward. "Time isn't up till midnight. Come around in the morning."

"Have you got any kick on the amount of work we've done?" asked Zane smoothly.

"No, I ain't," admitted Brett. "You've worked darn hard. I've seen to that," he added, with an exasperating laugh.

"Yes, and we've got something to show for it," cut in Conley triumphantly, as he took a gold sack out of his pocket, and let the contents fall into a pan. "We got all that out of our hole. I just wanted to show it to you," he sneered. "I knowed it would make you feel good. The ground is rich as blazes, and me and Bill here owns two-thirds of it. See?"

Brett said nothing.

"And I'll call you for a witness to our work, damn you!" cried Conley. "And you can't deny we done it good."

"No, I can't," admitted Brett.

"Come on, Bill," said Conley. "Let's go eat. We'll be back in the morning early to take possession."

"I've learned you the early rising habit, all right," grinned Brett.

He watched the pair disappear down the trail, and then turned to Nora, who stood looking very dejected.

"Just to think," she said bitterly, "of those two getting the most of a rich claim like this away from Dick."

"They haven't got it yet."

"What is to prevent them?" she retorted sharply. "They have done the work. You said so yourself. And they and their witnesses will swear the agreement through against Dick."

"Maybe so; but we'll play all the cards we've got. Those fellows are out of the way now till morning, and I must hustle while the daylight lasts, and find all Albers' stakes, so I won't have trouble locating to-night. I was afraid to do it before for fear they would notice my tracks in the snow and catch on."

"I'll have a good supper ready when you come back," said Nora.

"All right," answered Brett, putting on his snowshoes.

It was nearly dark when he returned.

"Did you find the stakes?" asked Nora.

"Yes, and I have been around the lines of the claim three times, packing down the snow between them. It will be like walking on a boulevard for you."

Promptly at midnight, Brett started out to jump the claim, with Nora acting as witness.

When they had finished, Nora was in the highest spirits, and she sent gay snatches of song dancing through the silence of the shadowy gulch.

"I can hardly wait for morning," she exclaimed. "Won't they go up in the air when they find out what has happened!"

"If I were guessing, I would guess yes," grinned Brett.

It was a beautiful night, and Nora paused for a moment at the door of the cabin, looking up at the sky, ablaze with winter stars.

"They beat footlights, don't they?" commented Brett.

"Footlights!" breathed Nora. "I had almost forgotten them out here. Why can't you let them alone?" she asked, with an impatient shrug.

"I'll let them alone if you will," he said. "But I suppose it is Gold Camp City for yours to-morrow," he added, with a half sigh, as he turned away.

"There they come!" exclaimed Brett, the next morning, as Conley and Zane slouched up the trail. "Now for it!"

"We're here," announced Conley.

"Yes, I see you," returned Brett cheerfully. "You're feeling a little wore out, ain't you? I guess that hard work you did has told on you some."

Conley scowled.

"We've come to take possession," he said. "I reckon you won't deny that we own two-thirds of Albers' claim now, including this 'ere cabin."

"Oh, yes, I will," returned Brett, with a cold nod.

"You will! Why?"

"Because you ain't done the assessment work on the claim, as the agreement calls for."

"Why ain't we?" put in Zane. "You said yourself we done good work."

"So you did, and lots of it."

"Then what are you talking about?" growled Conley.

"Come up on the side of the gulch a little ways, and I'll show you."

Brett led off, and the others trailed along behind him.

After they had gone a short distance, Brett stopped and pointed.

"Right here," he said, "kind of hid by that underbrush, is the right-hand lower stake of Albers' claim—mine now, because I've jumped it."

"Jumped it!" yelled Conley. "Ain't we done the work? What the——"

"Hold on, Conley," cut in Brett sharply. "I ain't through yet. Do you see that dead cottonwood across the gulch?"

"Yes," grunted Conley.

The left-hand lower stake is right alongside of it. You'll find it there, all right. I did. Now, if you'll sight a line from here to that cottonwood, you'll see that the cabin is just inside that line, but the prospect hole that you put down is about twenty-five feet below it. You boys has been working like niggers on Thompson's claim, which was in no wise necessary," chuckled Brett, "seeing as he has already done the work on that claim himself."

"Our hole is right alongside of the hole you was digging when we come," exclaimed Conley furiously.

"Sure!" drawled Brett. "The joke might have been on me. You see, this little lady here wasn't wise to the cabin being right on the line, and she begun that hole where she did because it looked like a nice, level place, and then, when I took hold, I kept right along down in the same place, careless like. You see, we was all fooled," chuckled Brett, "and I never got wise till that day I went after them ptarmigan, and then you was working so hard, and so happy like, that I couldn't bear to tell you the bad news."

Conley stood choking with rage.

"I'll—I'll——"

"No, you won't!" cut in Brett, with a sudden, ugly change of manner. "You two tin horns are going down the trail, and going now!"

Conley snarled something in Zane's ear.

Brett took a quick step forward.

"Naw," muttered Zane, shaking his head and backing away. "I don't want no row."

Conley hesitated a moment as Brett advanced, and then slouched after Zane, cursing under his breath.

Brett turned to Nora.

"That's the last of them," he said grimly. "Come into the cabin, and I will make out a bill of sale of the claim to you."

"Why to me?" asked Nora. "Dick Albers is the one to make it to."

"I was thinking that I would like to make it to you," answered Brett. "What's the odds?" he added, a little bitterly. "You are going to marry him, anyway, ain't you?"

"Marry Dick!" exclaimed Nora. "Well, I guess his wife would have something to say about that. She's waiting for him in Seattle, and now, thanks to you, he is going back to her with a rich claim."

"Good Lord!" cried Brett. "I've been a fool!"

"For helping Dick?"

"No—for hating him."

"For hating him! Why?"

"Because I thought he was going to marry you."

"Oh!" said Nora.

"I used to sit in the cabin when you was singing those songs, and think that Dick was the luckiest man in the world."

"Oh!" said Nora again.

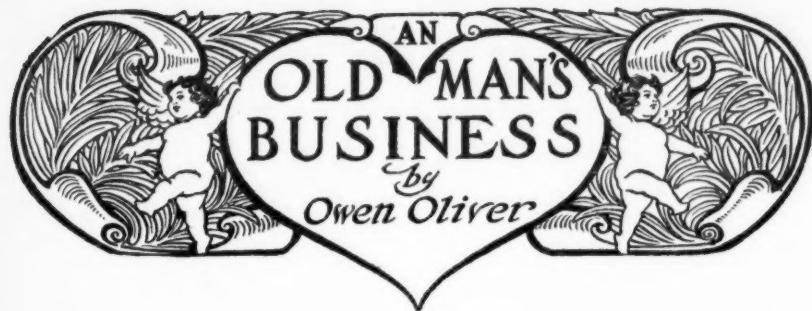
"And now somebody else is going to be the luckiest man in the world," went on Brett breathlessly, "and I want to be him, if I've got a show. Have I?"

Nora was silent.

"I guess I see how it is," said Brett slowly, after a moment. "I don't blame you. I'm nothing but a prospector who ain't struck it yet, and maybe I never will. I guess you would find it a dull life marrying me after having the footlights shining in your face."

Nora lifted her eyes.

"Forget the footlights, Jim," she said, with a little, tremulous laugh. "It's the stars for mine, with you and me standing under them together."



**A**N old man's business is other people's business. He has none of his own. There was a time when I—— Tut, tut! I am not yet old enough to boast of my misdeeds. At present I do not bore my friends. I have a good many, and they trust me with their affairs. "Mr. Dare is so discreet," they say. Well, here is a story of Mr. Dare's discretion.

The matter was sprung upon me at Mrs. Larne's reception. She used to be Dorothy Fox, and we have been on good terms ever since I stole a kiss from her forty years ago. She was a pretty little mischief then, and she is a fine woman at seven and fifty.

She asked me to go early to talk to people. I differ from other garrulous old gentlemen, she says, in one point, that my garrulity is interesting.

"I am particularly anxious that this affair should go off well, Richard," she said, after I had looked round and approved the arrangements. She is very competent, and does not need my help, but she likes to be confirmed by my probation. "I tell you first, as the oldest friend of the family—and of mine."

"I kissed you when you were a flapper," I observed.

"Wait till you are in your dotage to be retrospective," she advised, with a laugh that took me back many years. "I ought to have boxed your ears! I was going to say that I am holding this reception to announce Arthur's engagement. I wish it were possible to make you look surprised."

"When I look surprised," I explained, "I usually am not. As I don't look surprised, you may assume that I am."

I was, in fact, surprised very painfully. I had always anticipated that, when Arthur became engaged, it would be to my granddaughter, Christine. I was sure that Christine had the same idea. She is a foolish little thing, but all I have. She is very kind to an old man; and my principal business is hers.

"Anyhow," I continued, "you can surprise me with the name of the lady. I haven't the least notion who she is."

I hadn't the least care, either, since she wasn't Christine. I was glad that a cold had kept the child home. It would be a great blow to her.

"I was surprised myself," Mrs. Larne confessed. "It was so sudden. She only came here a month ago—Mrs. Morrison! You look so surprised that I suppose you are not."

"She is such a charming young lady," I observed, "that it would hardly surprise me if I became engaged to her myself. I don't approve of widows in a general way; but doubtless she is an exception."

"You don't know her well, I think?" Mrs. Larne suggested.

"I shall make it my business to do so," I replied.

I meant that. A man of sixty has a sixth sense—an instinct about people. My sense of personality said "adventuress" whenever I looked at Mrs. Morrison. If I could find out anything about her, I meant to do it. If this affair were broken off, Arthur would

probably marry Christine, after all. He would have fallen in love with her at once if he had met her at nineteen. The difficulty was only that he had been her "big brother" since she was ten.

I turned over what I knew of Mrs. Morrison while the early guests were arriving. It was very little. I had spoken to her only twice; but I had seen her three times. The first time was when I had visited Jamaica on a trip six months before. I had snapshotted her as the prettiest object I found there. She was a young widow, just beginning to "slight her mourning," as the women say. Nobody else seemed to mourn Morrison. He had enjoyed a curious luck at cards, they said; lived on his gambling gains, in fact. I doubted if his widow was really the well-to-do lady that she passed for.

Balmer, who had spent two years at Jamaica, came among the first. I went and talked to him. I told him a little story about two gamblers. He capped it with another which he had heard at Jamaica. Somehow, the conversation veered round to the heavy play there, and the late Mr. Morrison came into it. He was only a few months in the island before he died, Balmer said. Everybody thought it a happy release for his pretty young wife. They came from Bermuda.

At this point I remembered that I had a message for Mrs. Carter. She had spent several holidays at Bermuda.

I delivered no message to her, but commenced by declaring that she always reminded me of the spring—she preened herself at that!—and that the spring always reminded me of holidays; and where was a real bright place to take Christine? She mentioned Bermuda, and grew eloquent about the life there. There were "so many things to amuse Christine."

"And how about me?" I wanted to know. "Is there any bridge?"

There was every kind of gamble that a wicked person could desire, she assured me. Some men played all day. She named several. One was "a man named Morrison."

"Yes. The husband of that pretty

Mrs. Morrison, that nobody seems to quite make out."

"Residents there?"

"Oh, no! They came from—wherever it was? The captain of their steamer was an old friend of Harry's, and I remember he mentioned it when he lunched with us. Such a nice man! I love sailors. He said they transshipped into the *Mermaid* at—at somewhere or other, from the—well, I forget the name. But I recollect that they came from Hongkong, because the captain laughed at me for thinking it was in Japan. He said that I ought to learn geography, and I said it was much nicer not to know it, because ignorance gave more scope to your imagination. It does, don't you think?"

"Certainly," I assented. "You can go a long way with a little imagination and a little luck."

Luck, helped by a little imagination, played right into my hands five minutes afterward. Sir John Darling appeared; and Mrs. Larne passed him on to me.

"You are both so clever," she told us, "that every one else is afraid of you. So you'd better talk to each other."

"We've done that before," I said, "and when we're alone we drop the pretense of cleverness. We're just clever enough to find each other out. By the way, Sir John, there's something I want to ask you. Was there a man at Hongkong named Morrison? A gambler, with a pretty young wife?"

"No," he said. "I don't remember any one of that name, except an old tea merchant. He never touched a card, and his wife was as ugly as sin."

"A very big, ruddy man," I said. "He had a habit of saying 'Think so' to everything." Balmer had mentioned that just before.

"Oh-h-h!" Sir John nodded vigorously. "You've got his name wrong; or he had. Most likely that. You mean Hankin."

"Yes," I agreed, with a thrill of elation. "Hankin! That's it. I always mix up names. Wasn't there something against him?"

"Well," Sir John said, "nothing very definite; just enough to start me on a

few inquiries. I dropped them because he went away suddenly. I hadn't learned much; but I found out in a curious, accidental way that he came from Chicago, where he seemed to have gone by the name of Mayson. If Han-kin was Morrison, Morrison was a bad lot, if I'm not mistaken."

"Would you recognize his wife?" I asked.

He shook his head, and smiled slowly.

"Lady Darling wouldn't have them on her list," he said. "I heard that the woman was young and pretty. Some people said that she was a decoy duck. Bless my soul! It's a scandalous world! We old fellows know that——"

"That there's generally something in it, eh?"

We laughed together. Then I walked over to Clarke. If any one knew Chicago, it was Charlie Clarke. And if I know any one, it's Charlie.

"Charlie, old man," I began. "I badly want to know something. Did you ever meet a chap at Chicago named Mayson? Big, ruddy ruffian; gambler; I believe a sharper?"

"I know of him," Charlie replied.

He blew out his cheeks and gave a puff, as if he blew away contamination.

"What's more to the point," I continued. "Did you know his wife? And would you?"

"No wife there," Clarke stated. "But—well, I'll put it in a nutshell. Mayson had an extraordinary run of luck at cards. Anybody may have a run, but his went on too long, you see, and the committee of the Poker Club started inquiries about him. He disappeared before we had results. We never tracked him forward; but we traced him back, all right. He was one of the New York gang that they called 'The Parlor Party.' You may remember them?"

"They got in at wedding receptions and looted the presents, and all that sort of thing, didn't they?"

"That's it. He was known as Heavy Harry. There was a girl who passed as his wife. I rather fancy she *was*; but I don't know for certain. Anyhow, they worked together. She was said to

be a tip-topper. She was educated; had been a schoolmistress. Her real name was Mary Adams; but she generally passed as Lady De Vere. She was caught red-handed, and did time. He was in it, too; but they didn't manage to nab him. It was the day before she came out that he disappeared. So I shouldn't wonder if they joined forces again. Where are you off to?"

"To have a drink," I said. "I talk so much that I get dry. Sometimes I *don't* talk. I haven't talked to you tonight about—about anybody's wife. Understand?"

I fixed him with my eyes for a minute. Christine calls it my "now, then!" look.

"Somethinged if I understand," he denied. "But, if any one asks me—or if they don't—we've talked of nothing but safety razors."

We smiled grimly, and nodded. Clarke and I are old pals. I am glad to say that he has never asked me for the story of my inquiries. I don't like telling lies to my friends.

I looked round the room, and made sure that Mrs. Morrison hadn't arrived. Then I went to the cloakroom, put on my toccoat and hat, and strolled up and down the pavement, a little to the left of the Larnes' house—the way that Mrs. Morrison would come.

There was a nasty, drizzling rain, and nobody was about. I wanted to stop the business quietly, without letting Arthur Larne see my hand in it. I didn't wish any feeling between us, as I proposed to become his grandfather-in-law. I knew very well that he was fond of Christine, and was only like other silly young fools who overlook the fact that their little sister-friend chum is the proper wife for them. Girls don't make that sort of oversight. Christine didn't.

I was getting very damp, and rather bad-tempered, when I saw the yellow motor from Mrs. Morrison's hotel approach. I stopped it, went to the side, looked under the hood, and distinguished her pretty face peeping out from a bundle of soft wraps, like a flower in cotton wool.

"Oh!" she cried, with a fascinating

little laugh. "Mr. Dare, isn't it? Have I reached Mrs. Larne's, then?"

"Not quite," I said, "Lady De Vere."

I detected a faint quiver in the wraps; but she covered any facial disturbance with a laugh.

"Why!" she cried gayly. "You have mistaken me. How unflattering!"

She leaned forward, with her face audaciously in the light. Perhaps it was a good thing that I am an old man. Her features were regular enough to be beautiful and irregular enough to be pretty. Her eyes were violet and her complexion was honest.

"Now do you know me?" she asked.

"Why, yes!" I said. "I beg your pardon! It is Mrs. Mayson! Tut, tut! I am a muddle-headed old man! I mean Mrs. Hankin. Once upon a time Miss Mary Adams. A lady, of course, has the privilege of changing her name; provided that there is no just cause and impediment."

We stared at each other for a good while. Then she leaned back again in the shadow.

"Do I gather that you are an impediment?" she inquired.

"You may gather that there is an impediment," I informed her. "I am here to warn you of it."

"Why do you interest yourself in me?" she asked, very thoughtfully.

"My dear young lady," I said, "I am always on the side of youth and beauty! I wonder if you would take a word of friendly advice? It shows my friendliness that I have waited here in this beastly rain, risking rheumatism and all sorts of things, just to counsel you about a change of name."

There was a shrugging movement in the shadow.

"Bah!" a rather sharpened voice whispered.

"Exactly!" I agreed. "The Larnes are old friends of mine. I don't want a scene there. I don't particularly want a scene anywhere which might inconvenience a singularly charming young lady, who, we will assume, has left behind a—a rather naughty past. If I were you, I think I should leave the

present behind, too—very quickly. A word to the wise—and beautiful—eh?"

She laughed faintly.

"I wonder how much of this is bluff," she remarked. "Well, even if it isn't, you've got the drop on me. I suppose I'll have to go."

"Go quickly, my dear," I advised. "I don't think you are safe from intrusive inquiries at your hotel for more than half an hour."

She shrugged herself again.

"Now, be nice," she begged. "I'm done as regards Larne, and you know it. If there's nobody in this but yourself, don't worry me with fears of 'tecs, and all that sort of thing. I'll clear out, all right; but I'm pretty hard up. You see"—she leaned forward and smiled at me—"I've invested what little I had in—in leaving my naughty past behind. It's a bit hard on me, don't you think? I'm not such a bad sort, really. Do I look it?"

"My dear," I said, "I wish to Heaven you were half as good as you look! Well, well! I don't want to be hard on you. Give me an address, and I'll see that a few hundred are paid over to you, if you keep me out of it."

"Thanks!" She nodded. "I'll play the game and go quietly. It's easy to judge others, isn't it? Good-by. Shall we shake hands, or shan't we?"

I held out my hand, and she gave it a little squeeze.

"Do you know," she remarked, "I rather like you. I can see that you don't believe me. I can also see that there aren't any 'tecs." She laughed. "Well, we've shaken hands over it. I'll go. Here's the address. I think I can trust you to send those few hundreds."

"Yes," I promised. "I shall send them. My dear, if you can ever convince me that you would turn a few hundred more to—to leaving the naughty past *quite* behind—you'll probably get them."

"Oh!" She smiled. "I could convince *you*; but I won't write for them unless I can convince myself."

She never wrote. I am afraid—Ah! It's easy to judge others, as she said. She was a tip-topper,

"You're a good sport, beauty," I owned. "Good-by, and good luck to you—all the luck you deserve."

"Anything but that!" she cried.

She laughed, but her voice was unsteady. I was fool enough to send her twice what I intended. I shall repent of my wisdom before I repent of my follies, I often say.

Mrs. Larne was in a pucker when I went in.

"Wherever have you been, Richard?" she demanded. "I wanted you. Mrs. Morrison hasn't arrived."

"Feminine shyness," I suggested.

"But it's so late. They are beginning to go."

"Umph! You haven't announced it, have you?"

"Of course not! I didn't mean to stand up and cry it. People would have seen; and I should have told a few friends, and left them to run round and publish the news. Thank goodness, I haven't told a soul but you yet."

I would ask you to observe that she did not even ask if I had held my tongue. She knows me.

"Well," I advised, "don't! If you want to hear my candid opinion—"

"Yes?" She touched my arm in her eagerness.

"Nobody seems to know much of your Mrs. Morrison. Perhaps she doesn't want them to. It was rather a big crowd to face. She may be—indisposed."

Mrs. Larne set her mouth.

"I'll see that she faces it before she marries Arthur," she stated, "if that is her excuse. Arthur is going round to inquire as soon as the people have gone. You'll wait, of course."

"I'll wait," I promised.

Arthur did not have to go round to Mrs. Morrison's. An express messenger brought him a note a little later. He did not show me the note; but he spoke to me when the last guest had departed. He took it pretty coolly. He is nearly thirty, and a man of the world.

"She's gone," he said. "I gather that I've been a fool. Well, she was good-looking enough to excuse me, don't you think?"

"My dear boy," I said, "marriage is a big business. You shouldn't buy goods without a reference; and you should be quite sure that they are what you want. I gather that you weren't."

"Well," he admitted, "I'd been rather wondering whether she dressed the shop window for me." He is shrewd, as his mother's son should be. "I feel rather as if I'd like to kick myself. I dropped into it, and then—I couldn't help comparing her ideas and ways with those of—a girl like Christine. How is Chris?"

"She is getting over her cold," I said, "but she is rather mournful. She has an idea that her nose is red. So I don't know that she'll see you if you come round. If she does, you must be complimentary about her appearance."

"I'll come round," he promised. "The kid likes some one to talk to. She's getting a big kid now, bless her!"

"Yes," I agreed. "Yes. I suppose I shan't be able to keep her much longer. She's a pretty puss, and I notice that a good many fellows— Well, well! Good night, my dear chap."

"Good night," he said. "Nobody else has an inkling of this silly business, you understand."

"I understand," I assented.

I laughed to myself all the way home.

Christine summoned me into her room on my return. She was sitting in front of the fire in a dressing gown. Her hair was in curlers. Half a dozen books were strewn over the floor. A mirror was on the chair beside her.

"I feel horrid," she stated. "I don't care what you say. My nose *is* red; and all my face. I don't believe it will ever go right again."

I sat down and patted her head. She squealed, and declared that I had disturbed the curlers.

"How did it go off?" she asked.

"Admirably. I had some highly interesting conversations. Arthur seemed a bit bored, I thought."

She smiled with evident approval. I smiled at her smile; and she laughed.

"You silly old granddad!" she said.

"He's coming round to see you," I

observed. "I warned him that the cold had ravaged your beauty."

"I shall powder my nose," she decided thoughtfully. "No, I don't think I shall. If he doesn't like me when I'm ugly, he needn't like me at all."

"Bravo!" I cried. "Christine!"

She's a foolish thing, as I've said, But a man is safe with that sort of foolishness.

He came the next day; and a month later he proposed.

"It will be all right, granddad," she informed me. "If he likes me when I look horrid, he's sure to like me when I don't. You are a dear granddad. You've given me every nice thing I've ever had—except Arthur. I've got him

for myself. I always knew I should. And I'll keep him."

I think so. I shall have an eye upon them. All the discretion of the discreet Mr. Dare will be employed in smoothing their path; but they will never guess that their married happiness owes anything to his supervision. I know the way that things fall out in life—the things that loosen ties, and the things that bind together. And before I hand in my checks, if I am respited a few years, I will see the two I love best grown into loving married friends; and growing good men and women for another generation. The care of those who come after is an old man's business.



## FORTUNE'S SONG

**F**ORTUNE sang a golden song  
    Neath my latticed pane,  
When the world lay, bleak and gray,  
Drenched with winter rain:

Swift I raised my eager eyes, dazzled with desire,  
Poverty sat smiling there, close beside my fire.

Beckoned me with sun-browned hand,  
    Led me to the door,  
Where a single star, afar  
    Streamed the moorland o'er:

Sweeter, clearer, Fortune's song, breathed from golden lute;  
Poverty beside me smiled, but his lips were mute.

Fared we fast, and fared we far,  
    Down the Open Ways,  
Met the Spring a-wandering,  
    Through the smoke-sweet haze:

Drank from moorland bittern's cup, couched with dappled fawn;  
Poverty, amid the fern, sang at each new dawn.

Naught we recked of jeweled pomp,  
    Arras-prisoned hall;  
Peasant's fire and lonely byre  
    Heard our brother-call;

Down the wide-spread Wander Trail, 'neath blue moorland skies,  
Poverty sits by my fire, smiling comradewise.

MARTHA HASKELL CLARK.

# PLAYS AND PLAYERS

## BY A FIRST NIGHTER

T is not so long since I had occasion to tell the readers of AINSLEE's about that picture-book play, "The Garden of Allah," which, though the first in the field, is by no means the last. Oriental themes and scenes, in fact, appear to be the fashion of the hour. And now, after Berlin, Budapest, and London have used up most of their qualifying words of admiration, New York falls into line in appreciation of the new art, so called, of Herr Max Reinhardt, the distinguished German producer, and revealed in the wordless play, "Sumurun," at the Casino Theater.

Mr. Winthrop Ames, who was the director of our own New Theater, of big ambitions and a later blight, stands sponsor for the importation, which is certainly novel and entertaining. It is also some other things—quite open-faced, so to speak, in matters of questionable propriety for public exhibition. But it is a big and interesting show, though its influence on dramatic art in general scarcely promises to be so sure as the successionists believe.

"Sumurun" is an Arabian Nights tale, chock-full of movement and incident from beginning to end, and surprisingly grotesque in many of its details. In fact, there are times when this extreme deters rather than aids in the illusion. The comic interludes, for instance, are so obviously introduced for the mere purpose of making peo-

ple laugh that one cannot help wondering if the same artistic mind conceived them. But the affair, take it as a whole, is notable in an artistic way, and generally quite unusual.

To begin with, Herr Reinhardt has introduced a novel effect in bringing his characters down an illuminated runway, which leads over the orchestra chairs, from the front of the theater to the stage. And the entertainment begins with a brief epilogue, spoken by one of the characters, *Nur-al-Din*, the cloth merchant, whose constant dream is of the perfect woman whom presently he is to find, and you are to see, in the person of *Sumurun*, favorite wife of the tall and stately sheik, whose harem will also be the scene of the "warmest" exhibit of passionate lovemaking that our stage has ever held.

But to begin at the beginning, which, it will not be denied, is always a very good place to begin:

When the curtain rises there sits *Nur-al-Din* in his shop in the bazaar, unmindful of the hunchback showman, who, a little way off, is trying to interest the passers-by in the attractions of his show. *Nur-al-Din* is dreaming rosy-colored dreams of that fairest of women, ultimately to be realized in the coming of *Sumurun*, who, while she fingers his cloth, exchanges a glance with the merchant, so that the warmth as of a rich red wine pulses in his veins. And despair gives way to hope.

Even while he is at the beginning of

the romance, which is to bring his happiness, his neighbor, the hunchback showman, has blanched beneath the chalk-faced make-up at the sudden coming of the sheik with desires in his heart for the clown's adored one—the favorite dancing girl, otherwise known as the *Beautiful Slave of Fatal Enchantment*. She, on her part, cares nothing for the hunchback, and for the moment her fancy has turned to the son of the sheik, who likewise burns for possession of her. The old sheik approaches the hunchback with a proposition to buy the beautiful slave, but he will not hear of it. However, there are other ways and means. The old snake charmer is ready to act as go-between. So, while the show is in progress, and with the hunchback mad with jealousy at the discovery of his dancer's duplicity, the deal is made. The beautiful slave is to become the property of the old sheik, though you have previously seen that her love is given to his son.

It is too much for the hunchback. He cannot live without his beautiful dancer. And so he decides to take poison. But the deadly root sticks in his throat so that he only swoons, and is not dead. And as he lies fainting, the old snake charmer comes in with the money that has been paid for the slave girl, and whirls the hunchback about in a mad sort of dance, letting go of him finally, only to see him fall in a senseless heap to the floor. She believes that she has killed him. And she rushes out in terror. Then others come, and beat, and maltreat the hunchback, discover that he is dead, or seemingly so, and imagine that they are implicated in a crime. And so the body is stuffed into a sack.

And now you are in front of the palace of the sheik. And here *Sumurun* waits and watches, until presently the cloth merchant comes with some wares which the woman will examine, though all the while there are other thoughts in her heart. And now, much to his surprise, but equally to his joy, *Nur-al-Din* discovers that it is not he only who has had a dream. For *Sumurun*

is ready to love and be loved, and she only waits the favorable hour. It is not come yet. For now the sheik arrives, and the cloth merchant must be hidden. But the old sheik has doubts. And he orders the eunuchs to keep strict watch.

And presently comes the slave dealer, followed by porters, who carry the dancing girl in a litter, and after these comes a negro bearing the body of the hunchback in a basket. And in the confusion that presently ensues, *Nur-al-Din* and the hunchback are carried into the very palace of the sheik. But the hunchback still sleeps, though *Nur-al-Din* is wide awake at the prospect of his coming joy. For he is soon to see *Sumurun* again, and to know that she is his.

There is the sound of heavy footsteps, and the old sheik enters. And now *Nur-al-Din* must be again hidden away until the danger is past. And *Sumurun*, that she may the more easily deceive her lord, pretends to a great love for him, and would lure him to her. But now he is indifferent. For he has the beautiful dancer, who is led away to the sheik's own apartments, the while *Sumurun*, raging and jealous, hesitates about consoling herself with her handsome new lover, the merchant of cloth, and the dreamer of dreams. But presently the storm of her anger has passed, and she looks with favor upon the young man, and his heart beats furiously, and they fall into each other's arms.

And the curtain comes down. Which is rather fortunate, indeed, for the proceedings are getting rather warm.

But presently you are to see the stage mostly in gloom with the light of a great lantern shining down on the old sheik's couch, where he sleeps, while the beautiful slave rests beside him. But her eyes are open, and she awaits the coming of her lover, the son of the sheik, who steals up the long, winding stairway, enters the room, and with a muffled cry of joy takes her in his arms. Then the woman draws a dagger, and implores him to kill his father. But the deed of blood terrifies him. And all the while the hunchback, now

awakened from his swoon, and waiting the moment of vengeance, has been in hiding in the room. He cries out, and the old sheik wakes. The dancer and her lover recoil before him, but with a mighty stride he is upon them. And he buries his scimitar in his son's throat. Then the dying man leads him down the long stairway, so that presently he comes upon *Sumurun* and her lover. And again the scimitar is raised, and it would seem that the cloth dealer's days of dreaming are over. But at this moment the hunchback steals up, and buries a knife in the old sheik's back.

And then for the last time the curtain falls.

It is all very strange, and odd, and colorful, and mightily interesting. But there can be no doubt that it is an entertainment which is not for everybody. Of the performers in it, the best by far is Fräulein Leopoldine Konstantin, who plays the *Beautiful Slave of Fatal Enchantment*. She is a woman of wonderful beauty, with a remarkable gift for plastic and varied expression, and though she speaks no word she makes every moment vital and intelligible by her beautiful facial play. The hunchback is moderately well pantomimed by Herr Fritz Feher. And Camilla Eibenshutz is fairly effective as *Sumurun*. But though not without some beauty, she is by no means the fairest of women. A delightful figure is provided by Fräulein Suzanne Herzog. The others serve the general requirements.

Again an Arabian Nights tale in "Kismet" at the Knickerbocker, but in this case there is an accompanying text, spoken, and well spoken, indeed, especially by Mr. Otis Skinner, who is the principal performer, and a most able one. Mr. Edward Knoblauch is the author of "Kismet," which holds the gorgeous East in fee. Savagery and miracles of adventure and passion make up its substance.

In the opening scene, *Hajj*, the beggar, who lived in Bagdad a thousand years and one year since, sits by the door of the mosque of the carpenters, and snores. And when *Hajj* has awak-

ened there comes one *Jawan*, who had stolen his wife and slain his son, and, having flourished like unto the green bay tree, tosses *Hajj* a purse of gold in his mockery.

Thereafter you may see a fair procession of the turbaned faithful and sweet houris before you are translated to the bazaar of the tailors. Thither comes *Hajj* in his rags to buy him goodly raiment, and being made very wily by the grace of Allah, he sets two cloth merchants fighting that he may run away with their merchandise. The which he does, and is pursued with lamentations reaching even unto the gates of paradise. And now when you are permitted into the courtyard of the house of *Hajj*, you see his fair daughter and the caliph in the guise of a gardener's boy, who has come to woo her.

But when *Hajj* comes in his fine raiment with gifts for his daughter *Marsinah*, the watch breaks in, and hales him away for a thief, before *Mansur*, the wazir of police. Now, this *Mansur* is in fear of the vengeance of Allah, being commanded by the caliph to account for certain moneys which he has spent and cannot return. Therefore, he devises the murder of the caliph, and when he sees that *Hajj* is a very sturdy man, he commands him to do the deed. *Hajj* is loath to slay the commander of the faithful, but being promised that *Mansur* will make him a great one, and take his daughter to wife, he at last consents.

Behold the diwan of the caliph. He commits the enemy of *Hajj*, that vile *Jawan*, to prison, and then comes *Hajj* in the guise of a Moorish magician, and works magic with fire, and stabs the caliph. But a coat of mail turns the blow, and all that *Hajj* gets by it is chains in the same prison as *Jawan*, the vile. As he lies there, he sees his enemy, and finds strength to break his chains, and slay *Jawan* with his own knife. Thereafter he puts on the robes of that *Jawan*, and since *Jawan* was pardoned his wickedness for charity to the poor, *Hajj* escapes, leaving his enemy dead.

Now, before all this, *Hajj*, desiring greatness for his daughter, had given her into the hands of *Mansur's* slaves. But presently *Hajj* kills *Mansur*, for behold this *Mansur* was proven by the half of an amulet to be the long-lost son of *Jawan*, the wicked. Then comes the caliph with his guards, seeking passionately his *Marsinah*. And he makes her his best beloved of wives, but *Hajj*, for his many sins, is sent into banishment.

Besides Mr. Skinner, who plays with much color and fire, the cast includes a newcomer, Miss Rita Jolivet, who is an appealing *Marsinah*, and Mr. Hamilton Revelle and Mr. Fred Eric, who give pictorial effectiveness, and something more, to the rôles of the caliph and wazir.

Again there are color, and plenty of it, and the novelty of a new locale, in Mr. Richard Walton Tully's Hawaiian play, "The Bird of Paradise," which is rather lacking, however, in sustained dramatic interest. Its worst fault is its discursiveness. The play tells a romantic story with a tragic ending.

*Paul Wilson*, a young American physician, lands on the Puna coast of Hawaii, with his betrothed, *Diana Larned*, on his way to the leper settlements. He is instantly enthralled by the charm of *Luana*, a lovely native woman, who has just been informed by the old priest of Pele that she is the great-granddaughter of old *Kamehaha*, and the lawful queen of the islands. *Luana* frankly admits her passion for *Paul*, and the latter decides to remain with her, in spite of the solemn warnings of one *Dean*, a degraded beach comber, who has drunk of the cup of tropical abandonment to the dregs. *Diana* takes *Dean* under her own protection, and bids him follow her up into the mountains. Two years later she has worked his complete reformation, and he returns with her to Puna, on the way home to the United States, where

fame and fortune await him as the discoverer of the bacillus of leprosy.

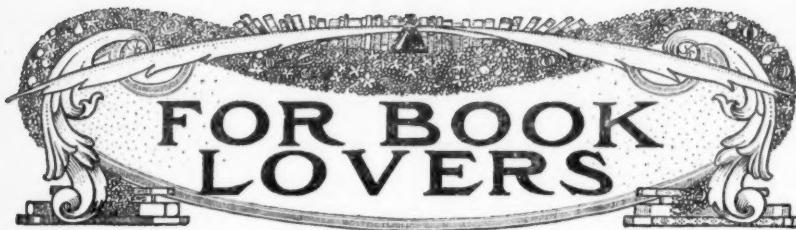
He finds *Wilson* sunk deep in lethargy, with no remaining capacity for action or sense of self-respect. *Luana* is still devoted to *Wilson*, but he is beginning to regard her with indifference and weariness. *Captain Hatch*, a wealthy sugar planter, wishes to make her queen—for his own political and commercial purposes—and her own priest urges her to accept the offer, but, fearing that her promotion will mean separation from *Paul*, she refuses the offer. From this moment the priest is her foe, and pursues her with his most fearful spells.

Meanwhile, *Hatch* meditates the establishment of a republic, under American protection, and the sending of *Wilson* and *Luana* as delegates to Washington. But his plans are defeated, and soon there is a breach between *Luana* and *Wilson*. And now *Luana*, broken-hearted by his cruelty, falls readily under the power of the old superstitions, and, obeying the last spell of the old priest, now dead, she resolves to propitiate the offended Pele, and secure the happiness of her people, by offering herself as a sacrifice to the God of Fire. So she casts herself into the fiery furnace of Kilauea, and the drama ends.

The native characters in the play are much better handled by the playwright than the white people, but in the earlier scenes the figure of the beach comber provides Guy Bates Post with opportunity for a fine characterization. The rôle of *Luana* is beautifully played by Laurette Taylor, and there is interesting work by Pamela Gaythorne and Lewis Stone, the latter a newcomer from the West.

Scenically the production is very beautiful.

Acted first at Daly's, "The Bird of Paradise" was subsequently transferred to the Maxine Elliott Theater.



# FOR BOOK LOVERS

**T**HE Bobbs-Merrill Company has just published a new book by Mrs. Wilson Woodrow entitled "Sally Salt."

This novel will doubtless make its strongest popular appeal because it is, above all things, a good story, told in the manner—which is a matter of instinct with the born storyteller—that arrests attention at the outset, and constantly stimulates interest as it progresses, leaving the reader full of sympathy and affection for its characters.

Sally Salt herself is intensely human; young, vital, enterprising, emotional, warm-hearted, and sympathetic, yet a cool-headed executive, she dominates the story from beginning to end. Anthony Streatham, the idealist, is the only one of the characters that seems to elude her, partly, perhaps, because she is really in love with him; but even he, at the end, when he is recovering from an illness, surrenders.

But Sally, since she is human, has her tragic moments. The grim, menacing figure of Mrs. Hurd brings the darker shadows into Sally's life and into the story. Hard and avaricious, she makes unscrupulous use of Streatham's supposed disgraceful secret to extort money from Sally, careless of the latter's despair at what she believes to be his duplicity. Sally's struggles with her blighting suspicions and with her jealousy of Hilda Hurd, another temperamental dreamer, give the story the dramatic qualities which make it intensely interesting.

The book is filled with that quality which, for want of a better word, is called atmosphere, a quality which gives color and individuality to the whole

story. This makes a real romance of a phase of farming life in the Middle West, in spite of the conditions which are commonly associated with such life.



Dodd, Mead & Co. have published a rather gruesome French mystery tale, by Albert Boissière, called "The Missing Finger," translated by Mary J. Safford.

The story is told by a certain Monsieur Aubry, an artist, and the scene is laid in and around Dieppe. Aubry, who is spending his vacation on the Norman coast, stops by chance at a small inn near Dieppe which is kept by Otto Van Brymans and his wife. With them also lives Otto's twin brother, Franz; so like his brother in appearance that it is impossible, for a stranger, at any rate, to distinguish one from the other. Aubry puts up at the inn, and soon establishes friendly relations with Otto and his wife, but seems unable to do the same with Franz.

The latter has never recovered from his disappointment at his brother's marriage, and has become surly and secretive. He has, as it later appears, maintained a liaison with Aubry's divorced wife, who lives in Dieppe, and soon discovers the former relations between his mistress and the artist.

The latter makes a visit to Dieppe with the two brothers, during which one of them is murdered, and Aubry is accused of the killing of Franz, his former wife's lover.

This is the beginning of the mystery, which is the real story, and the solution of which takes up the balance of the narrative.

In spite of the fact that the plot is more or less complicated, and that it

therefore demands the close attention of the reader who would follow its intricacies, the story has its interest for those who love sordid and ghastly details.



A book of mystery stories, quite different from "The Missing Finger," is "Average Jones," by Samuel Hopkins Adams, published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company.

The tales purport to give an account of some of the accomplishments of Adrian Van Reypen Egerton Jones, A. V. R. E. Jones—hence Average Jones. If the reader is not discouraged at the outset by this rather foolish play-juggling with names and initials, he will continue to find out that A. V. R. E. Jones is "a composite photograph of any thousand well-conditioned, clean-living Americans between the ages of twenty-five and thirty," with nothing to do on twenty-five thousand a year.

A casual talk at the Cosmic Club prompts Mr. Jones to invent a new business in following up queer advertisements, and "tracing down" fraudulent advertisers. He establishes it by announcing in the newspapers that he, as "Adviser," will protect those who have been stung against advertising crooks.

Of course, business begins with a rush; and, before Mr. Jones has time to suspect his talent for detective work, he is besieged with applications for help in the solution of mysteries in the true Sherlock Holmes style.

The book contains the accounts of eleven of these detective adventures, most of them as extravagant and fantastic as the author's imagination can make them, obviously told in this manner to furnish, as the publishers' announcement states, "entertainment always gay, brisk, and fascinating." We are assured that Average Jones is the cleverest detective since Sherlock Holmes. Well, all of them are that.



The story of the youngster, just out of college, suddenly thrown out into the cold, cold world, either by an angry

and disappointed father or by circumstances, which seem to be equally regardless of his cultivated sensibilities, doubtless has its occasional parallels in real life; but in fiction such parallels are multiplied almost without end.

"The Boss of Wind River," by A. M. Chisholm, published by Doubleday, Page & Co., tells this tale, with Joe Kent in the star rôle. He falls heir to his father's lumber business, and assumes the direction of it without experience and without knowledge of the specific problems which it involves. He is, of course, confronted immediately with difficulties which, in real life, can be overcome not merely by the experience which he lacks, but also by matured and forceful traits of character and trained business instinct.

His father's property is mortgaged and otherwise involved; his lumber interests are attached by unscrupulous rivals, and particularly by the lumber trust, which seeks to absorb his camps; the transportation companies are coerced into imposing ruinous rates in carrying his output to market; labor troubles in his camps are secretly fomented, and finally his salvation is made to depend upon a single drive of logs, which is obstructed in every possible way.

Through all this, he develops with marvelous rapidity, and he succeeds in the end, almost alone, sustained, naturally, only by the optimism and devotion of a beautiful young woman, who, up to the dénouement, so successfully disguises her love for him that, when it is at last disclosed, he is overwhelmed with astonishment and a humble sense of his own unworthiness.

Industrial adventure fiction is the class to which this tale belongs.



No one has so far succeeded in rivaling Mrs. Ruth McEnery Stuart in her delineation of negro characteristics, and comparatively few writers excel her gift of story-telling, at any rate in her own peculiar field.

A new book by her has recently been published by the Century Co. "The

"Haunted Photograph" is a collection of four tales of negro character and life. The charm that pervades them proceeds primarily from Mrs. Stuart's sympathy and understanding, and that is what gives preëminence to "Whence and Whither," and "A Case in Diplomacy," since it is in these that she portrays the plantation life she knows so well, and evidently loves so much.

In these two stories she has given full scope to her delightful humor, her genuine and moving pathos, and her unerring characterization. Her touch is so light and so assured that it tends to obscure her only weakness, a defective sense of construction. But even to mention a defect in her work seems almost ungracious to an author who gives so much and gives so freely.



William Johnston's novel, "The Yellow Letter," published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company, assuredly has the virtue of originality, at any rate, in the conception of its theme.

It is a mystery story with many of the conventional tricks familiar to readers of current detective fiction, the most conspicuous one being the character and methods of Davis, the post-office inspector, who is a detective of the true Sherlock Holmes type.

The novelty of the story is to be found in the methods of the criminal, a marvelously ingenious rascal, who invents and operates a system of blackmail which is almost laughable in its simplicity, but wonderfully effective in producing results.

Harding Kent, who tells the story, becomes involved in the mystery when the sister of his fiancée, Louise Farrish, attempts suicide. The father of the girls shortly afterward succumbs to a stroke of paralysis at the sight of the fragment of a letter written upon yellow paper. Kent enlists the services of

his friend Davis to solve the mystery, having been unable to extract any information from the Farrishes. Three other suicides follow in quick succession, indications pointing to other yellow letters as the causes.

In following the clews, Kent and Davis are led to a suburban town in New Jersey, where they trace the letters to their source and corner the blackmailer, finally forcing him to disclose the nature of his scheme.

On the whole, the tale is well developed; it is a good piece of construction, and one cannot help feeling a sensation of satisfaction at the surprisingly simple and plausible explanation.

The detective relies, in the Holmes fashion, upon deductive reasoning, and the author has, unfortunately, permitted himself, in various instances, wholly unwarranted assumptions in forging the chain of evidence.



#### Important New Books.

"The Healer," Robert Herrick, Macmillan Co.

"Uncertain Irene," Katherine Holland Brown, Duffield Co.

"Peter Ruff and the Double Four," E. Phillips Oppenheim, Little, Brown & Co.

"The Heart of a Woman," Baroness Orczy, Hodder & Stoughton.

"Torchy," Sewell Ford, E. J. Clode.

"Riders of the Purple Sage," Zane Grey, Harper & Bros.

"The Little Green Gate," Stella Callaghan, G. P. Putnam's Sons.

"He Comes Up Smiling," Charles Sherman, Bobbs-Merrill Co.

"Jane Dawson," Will N. Harben, Harper & Bros.

"Just Patty," Jean Webster, Century Co.

"The Mansion," Henry Van Dyke, Harper & Bros.

"Victor Ollnee's Discipline," Hamlin Garland, Harper & Bros.

"The Earth," Muriel Hine, John Lane Co.

"Recollections Grave and Gay," Mrs. Burton Harrison, Charles Scribner's Sons.

"The Nine Tents," James Oppenheim, Harper & Bros.



## Talks With Ainslee's Readers

HOW old is a woman thirty-eight? This question is not nonsense. We ask it in good faith. Recently we read a story in which a woman thirty-eight sacrificed her love because she realized that she was thirty-eight. Shortly after this we received a delightful little tale from Wells Hastings, author of "The Man with the Brown Derby," that seemed to us to answer the question much more satisfactorily. "Youth" is its title, and it should appeal especially to all women who are thirty-eight, all who ever have been thirty-eight, and all those who hope or expect to be thirty-eight at some time in the near or distant future. We are going to print this story in AINSLEE'S for May.



HERE is one very striking story in this present number of which we said nothing in our last talk with you. We felt that a truthful description of "The Boss of Blatenburg," as it appealed to us, might keep you from reading it rather than attract you to it. It is by no means a typical AINSLEE story, and its ending, although the only logical one under the circumstances, is neither pleasant nor satisfactory. It was only after considerable discussion in the office that we finally decided that its rugged realism and remarkable character drawing make it a story that no magazine could afford to let go. If it were less forceful, less convincing, it would be less unpleasant. We are bound to feel after reading it that such conditions do exist in some communities—conditions that might easily compel a man to choose between his duty to his own honor and his duty to the good names of his father and the father of the woman he loves. Did we make a mistake in printing this remarkable story in the magazine whose purpose is to entertain? We are anxious to hear what you think about it.

Of Thomas Addison's contribution to the May number we have no doubts. A fascinat-

ing, if rather sophisticated, young actress is left stranded by illness in a hospitable Southern inn. Mine host—homely, bashful, and thoroughly lovable—keeps the reader as well as the heroine halfway between tears and laughter with his transparent schemes for aiding her without her knowledge. "Sally Bunn," as the tale is called, has all the charming pathos and humor that characterized Mr. Addison's first story, "St. Anthony's Vision," which was printed in AINSLEE'S just one year before.



ONE of the most important features in this coming AINSLEE'S will be the first story of a remarkable series by Andrew Souter, author of "Penitence Island," the novella in this number. "The Marquis" is one of the most lovable, gallant, and irresponsible young heroes that it has ever been our good fortune to meet. In the opening story, "Sent Down," we see him expelled from his university for the faults of a youth whose sister has nice eyes, wept over by a mother who believed without knowing, and cast out into the world by a misunderstanding father with orders not to return until he has made a man of himself. Through all his quixotic adventures he possesses much of the whimsical charm of some of William J. Locke's heroes, together with a paradoxical half-boisterous, half-gentle something all his own. While not in the least imitative, "The Marquis," we think, might fittingly be described as a "Broad Highway" with a present-day setting.

Speaking of "The Broad Highway," did you know that Jeffery Farnol belongs with O. Henry, William J. Locke, Joseph C. Lincoln, H. F. Prevost Battersby, and all the others whom AINSLEE'S first brought to the attention of American readers? Mr. Farnol's "A Boy and a Man" was printed in the February number, 1908, three years before his great book success.

IT is comparatively easy to write stories of "the 400" that will appeal to the "submerged tenth." Dazzling lights, glistening shoulders, and jewels so brilliant that their wearers should really sleep in the safe—all are hungrily accepted by the woman whose knowledge of Society, with a capital "S," is limited to unpleasant experiences with some society for the prevention of something or other. It is equally easy to write "basting threads from the seamy side" that will appear sufficiently convincing to the fortunate lady whose sole knowledge of the slums was gathered that time when she went down to meet Grace on her arrival from Europe, and her car broke down "right in the most dreadful part of town, my dear!"

Writing stories about the people for whom you are writing is a different matter. That is the severe test. The readers know as much about the subject as the author; they know their own life and manners; they know their own virtues, and, sometimes, even their own faults. This makes them the most critical public imaginable. In many cases they seek entertainment in reading only when they are bored by themselves and by each other. The writer who can interest them in themselves under such conditions is indeed a master of her art. As you may have guessed, we have in mind Margaretta Tuttle. For over a year she has been writing for AINSLEE's stories about the sort of people who read AINSLEE's. How much you have enjoyed your reflections in these literary mirrors that she has held up before you, we know from your letters. Mrs. Tuttle's "Doctor Gardiner" series will be concluded with the complete novelette in the May number. "In His Own House" is the title of it.



**S**UPPOSE that an American cowboy and an East Indian potentate, having been born at the same moment, were able, in the spirit, to climb the rays of their common astral star at night and commune with each other. Suppose that they ex-

changed bodies occasionally, the cowboy filling an Oriental princess' heart with adoration by his deeds of bravery; the Indian potentate keeping the cowboy's body in constant jeopardy through his carelessness in holding more than the legal allowance of aces. Suppose that the Indian finally met an inglorious death for stealing horses while inhabiting the cowboy's earthly shell, leaving his astral brother imprisoned in a body against the color of which, hailing from Texas, he still held considerable prejudice. To suppose all this under ordinary circumstances would be difficult, to say the least. But as told by Thomas P. Byron in May AINSLEE's, "Kid Pink and the Maharaja" is not only genuinely funny, but surprisingly plausible.



**K**ADE JORDAN, whose best work is too well known to you for comment, tells in the May number of a beautiful young widow in Paris, who, wearied of motors and dinners and things, goes in daring search of a real surprise. She finds it. This author has never written more delightfully.

Anna Alice Chapin, author of "Rufus of the Birds," in this AINSLEE's, has spun a silken yarn about four child-hearted opera stars and a broken old impresario. "The Scratch Company" is itself almost music.

In "The Flying Diver," by Joseph Ernest, we have at last found an aeroplane romance with a real thrill to it. "Mooley Maud" will be Margaret Cameron's first contribution to AINSLEE's. "The Heathen Chinee," a tale of the California coast, is one of Herman Whittaker's best. A dramatic story of the Philippines by Nalbro Bartley, another of F. Berkeley Smith's characteristic pen pictures, a charming little Western romance by Flavia Rosser, and a most unusual story by Owen Oliver round out the fiction for May.

We believe that you will find this coming one a thoroughly successful number of AINSLEE's, a trifle better balanced than this present one, perhaps, and every bit as entertaining as the March number.



# This May Be Just What You Need

Beyond all question, some of the every-day beverages are harmful to heart, nerves and digestion.

Many mothers refuse coffee and tea to their children, yet by strange inconsistency use these beverages themselves.

In consequence, sooner or later, and according to the degree of natural strength of the individual, there comes a time when ill results are surely felt.

Then, it is well to heed Nature's warning.

Every member of the family can drink

# POSTUM

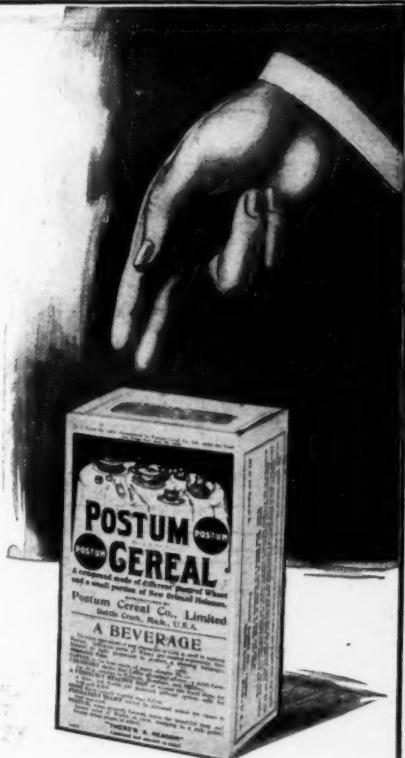
with certainty of benefit.

A change from coffee and tea to Postum has proven a revelation of comfort to thousands, and the delightful flavour of this wholesome food-drink makes the change easy and pleasant.

*"There's a Reason"*

Postum Cereal Company, Limited,  
Battle Creek, Mich., U. S. A.

Canadian Postum Cereal Co., Ltd.  
Windsor, Ontario, Canada.





**A**MID the richness of silken tapestry and storied marble, where taste is cultivated and commands the best — there is found unvarying appreciation of Nabisco Sugar Wafers.

Whether the service be simple or elaborate, this charming dessert confection is always appropriate and it always pleases.

***In ten cent tins***  
Also in twenty-five cent tins



CHOCOLATE TOKENS — another delicate sweet with a coating of rich chocolate.

Tell your newsdealer: "Deliver this magazine to me each month."

# The growth of heating

Look through the new buildings all about you, in the planning and construction of which there is used the deepest thought for the comfort and convenience of their occupants, and you will find they are one and all thoroughly, economically and sanitarily warmed and ventilated by

## AMERICAN & IDEAL RADIATORS AND BOILERS

But you don't need to wait until you build a new house—why not comfort your present home by this ideal heating outfit? IDEAL Boilers and

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A No. 1-22-W IDEAL Boiler and 42 ft. of 30-in. AMERICAN Radiators, heating system \$180, were used to heat this cottage. At this price the goods can be bought of any reputable, competent dealer. This does not include cost of labor, pipe, valves, freight, etc., which are extra, and vary according to climatic and other conditions.



Radiators are now so easily put in—not one-tenth the muss of papering or painting. Our simple aim—to build up an army of friends—satisfied users—has resulted in an astonishing increase in the annual sales of IDEAL Boilers and AMERICAN Radiators—until we have been obliged by the demand to also build factories in Canada, England, Germany, France, Italy and Austria.

This world-wide manufacturing has enabled us to incorporate into our outfit the cleverest ideas and practices of the skilled and scientific men of these great nations. Nowhere else, in any line, can the public obtain better quality or greater value in heating devices. Investigate now!

At present low costs of raw material and freight savings, our prices are most attractive. IDEAL Boilers and AMERICAN Radiators will make every ounce of fuel yield the full volume of heat and distribute it evenly and genially where it is needed in every nook and corner of the building. To learn how to get better heat and more comfort for less money, send or ask for free book, "Ideal Heating."

We have also brought out the first genuinely practical, automatic, durable Vacuum Cleaner. The machine sets in the cellar, and all the dirt it so thoroughly and perfectly gathers is drawn from the rooms through small iron suction pipes leading to big, sealed dust-bucket in cellar. The foul, germ-laden air, after the dust is removed, is vented out-doors. Put with utmost simplicity into any kind of old or new dwelling or building. The sole running cost adds but a few dimes to your monthly electricity bill. Ask for catalog of ARCO WAND Vacuum Cleaner.

Showrooms in all  
large cities

**AMERICAN RADIATOR COMPANY**

Write Department 39  
816-822 S. Michigan  
Avenue, Chicago



Tell your newsdealer: "Deliver this magazine to me each month."



# Spencer Heaters Positively Reduce Coal Bills $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$

THE "Spencer" does this because it successfully burns an equal tonnage of the small sizes of hard coal, costing from \$2 to \$3 less per ton. This is possible because the

## Spencer Steam or Hot Water Heater

has a water-jacketed magazine feed and an entirely different grate construction.

**Magazine Feed** This device holds a 24-hours' coal supply in ordinary weather—12 in severe. Coal feeds automatically into the fire-box as needed. With a "Spencer" in the house, the "women folks" never need shovel coal under any conditions.

**Maintains Even Temperature** An even temperature can be maintained all day without attention, and all night as well, if desired.

**The Quickest Steaming Device** The "Spencer" is a combination water-tube and return tubular boiler—the quickest and most successful steaming device known.

**For Apartments and Flats** the "Spencer" is ideal. Not solely for its remarkable coal economy, but it does away with the night fireman, keeping up steam for 12 hours at a stretch in the most severe winter weather, without attention.

**The "Spencer"**—In its coal savings alone, the "Spencer" will easily pay for itself in a few seasons. Many save \$100 or more in fuel bills annually. Hundreds of "Spencers" installed 20 years ago are still saving a like amount each year. A heater being practically a lifetime investment, you should investigate its record carefully, including its coal consumption. Before accepting any make.

**SPENCER HEATER CO.**  
350 People's Nat'l Bank Bldg., SCRANTON, PA.  
Branches: New York, 501 Fifth Ave., Cor., 42d St.; Chicago, 160 N. Dearborn St.; Philadelphia, Morris Bldg.; Boston, 79 Milk St.; St. Louis, Century Bldg.; Detroit, Ford Bldg.; Buffalo, White Bldg.; Canadian Sales Representatives: The Waldon Co., Winnipeg, 92 Princess St.; Toronto, 208 Lumsden Bldg.



### VALUABLE BOOKLET FREE

One, our new 40-page catalog "H" tells how the "Spencer" is made and why it is the greatest money, time and labor-saving heater on the market. The other contains several scores of endorsements of "Spencer" users. Both will prove valuable in satisfactorily deciding the heater question.

*Any Time  
O'Day*



Morning

# Post Toasties

With cream and sugar or fruits  
are wholesome and please the  
palate.

Crisp bits of Indian corn,  
cooked and toasted to an appetizing golden brown.

Ready to serve direct from  
the package.

A Minnesota woman writes:

"I use Post Toasties because they are liked by all my family,  
making a convenient food to serve on any occasion."

"I use it for a breakfast food; then again with canned fruit or  
preserves, as a most delicious dessert for dinner or supper—each one  
desiring more."

"My experience is, all who taste want more."

## Post Toasties

*"The Memory Lingers"*

Postum Cereal Company, Limited, Canadian Postum Cereal Co., Ltd.  
Battle Creek, Mich., U. S. A. Windsor, Ontario



Noon



## No-Rim-Cut Tires *(10% Oversize)*

# Touch the Million Mark

This month we celebrate.

A million Goodyear Automobile Tires have now gone into use.

Over half that number have been used within the past 12 months. Yet this is our 13th year.

Think what that means. More used this last year than in 12 years altogether.

Just because No-Rim-Cut tires—our patented type—suddenly became the sensation.

A few men proved them out. Then thousands proved them—then tens of thousands more.

Now a million tires. Now a trebled demand over last year. Now a larger sale than any other tire commands.

### 200,000 Users—

### 127 Makers Adopt Them

No-Rim-Cut tires have been tested, probably, on 200,000 cars. And this flood-like demand is the result of that testing.

For the year 1912, 127 leading motor car makers have contracted for Goodyear tires.

That means the reign of a new-type tire—a tire that cuts tire bills in two.

It means that men who know, want tires that can't rim-cut. They want oversize tires, to save the blow-outs due to overloading.

They want hookless tires. And they want tires which embody the final results of 13 years spent in perfecting them.

They get all these features in No-Rim-Cut tires. Yet they cost no more than other standard tires.

So these 200,000 demand these tires, as you will when you know.

### Old-Type Tires

The old-type tires which No-Rim-Cuts are displacing are known as clincher tires.

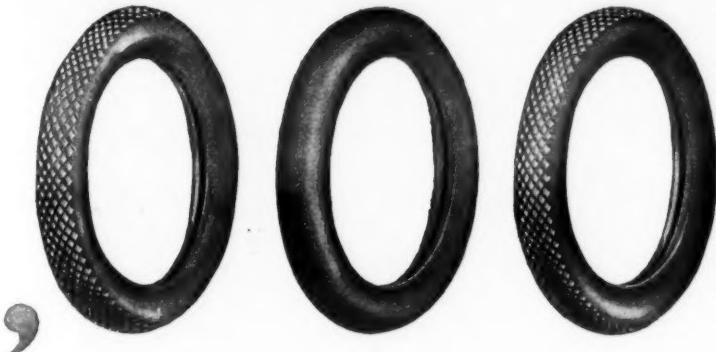
They have hooks on the base, which hook into the rim flange.

When the tire is run wholly or partly deflated by neglect or accident, the rim flanges cut it. Such tires are often ruined in a single block.

No-Rim-Cut tires have no hooks on the base. Yet they fit any standard rim. These tires make rim-cutting forever impossible, as a glance at the tires will show you.

And they are twice as easy to detach as old-type clincher tires.

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## Why the Average Saving Is 48 Per Cent

Statistics show that 23 per cent of all ruined clincher tires are rim-cut.

No-Rim-Cut tires forever end that worry and expense.

Then No-Rim-Cut tires are 10 per cent over the rated size. That means 10 per cent more air—10 per cent greater carrying capacity. And that, with the average car, adds 25 per cent to the tire mileage.

Thus we figure 48 per cent. It varies, of course, with proper use or abuse. Your cost for tire upkeep depends somewhat on you.

But this saving of rim cutting, plus the added size, will cut the average tire upkeep in two. And tens of thousands have proved it.

### No Extra Price

No-Rim-Cut tires now cost no more than other standard tires. They used to cost one-fifth extra.

Think what that means.

Tires which can't rim-cut cost the same as tires that do. Oversize tires cost the same as skimpy tires.

You are offered your choice at an

equal price. Which tire will you take?

### We Control Them

We control by patents the only way to make a practical tire of this new type.

Three flat bands of 126 braided wires are vulcanized into the tire base.

Other devices are employed to make a hookless tire, but in use they have proved very unsatisfactory.

That is why the demand for this new-type tire has centered on Goodyear No-Rim-Cut tires.

When you change from the old type—as you will—do not adopt an experiment. Get the tire of which one million have been tested out.

No-Rim-Cut tires, in these days of tire wisdom, far outsell all others. Get these tires.

**Our 1912 Tire Book**—based on 13 years spent in tire making, is filled with facts you should know. Ask us to mail it to you.

# GOOD YEAR

### No-Rim-Cut Tires

With or Without Non-Skid Treads

**THE GOODYEAR TIRE & RUBBER CO., AKRON, OHIO**

Branches and Agencies in 103 Principal Cities. We Make All Kinds of Rubber Tires, Tire Accessories and Repair Outfits

Main Canadian Office, Toronto, Ont.

Canadian Factory, Bowmanville, Ont.

(544)



Never rub dirt  
off with a dry  
handkerchief

## Never rub the dirt in Always wash it off

During the rainy season, the air is heavy with smoke and soot which the pores of the skin are constantly breathing in. These conditions, which must be endured, soon ruin any skin unless precautions are taken to intelligently *counteract* their effect.

Never rub this dirt off with your dry handkerchief. If it were not for the oil in your skin, which protects it, you soon would ruin the texture of your skin by the irritation of rubbing the soot and dirt over it. Instead of this way which throws an unnecessary burden on the skin and tends to overtax it, use this treatment.

Apply your hot wash cloth, lathered with Woodbury's Facial Soap, for several minutes. Then when the pores are thoroughly open, rub in a fresh lather of Woodbury's Facial Soap. It dissolves the dirt, makes it almost melt away without the slightest irritation. Then close the pores and arouse the circulation in your skin by a cold water rinse.

Use Woodbury's regularly. It costs 25c a cake. No one hesitates at the price after their first cake.

*For we will send a sample cake. For 10¢ samples of Woodbury's Facial Soap and Woodbury's Facial Powder. For 50¢ a copy of the Woodbury Book on the care of the skin and scalp and samples of the Woodbury preparations. The Andrew Jergens Co., 3997 Spring Grove Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio.*

### Woodbury's Facial Soap

For sale by dealers  
everywhere



The Sohmer Cecilian      The Farrand Cecilian

## The Cecilian Piano

—that any one can play—



A tribute to the superior merits of the "Cecilian"  
—perfect under all weather conditions

*The Farrand Company, Detroit, Mich.*

*Gentlemen:* — This photograph shows the Cecilian Piano in the cabin of my steam yacht "Galaten," where it has been for six years. Without a single repair, my Cecilian is as perfect as when I purchased it the day you installed it, after traveling almost everywhere on the Great Lakes, and being frozen in six winters through, with the "Galaten" in her slip.

(Signed) E. L. Forn, Detroit, Feb. 10-'12.

Will you allow us to give you a demonstration of the beauty of tone and touch on the "Cecilian." Your address on a postal please. Address Department 56.

**THE FARRAND CO., Detroit, Mich.**

### "Ask Any Of Our Tourists"

## AROUND THE WORLD ^ 110 DAYS ^ S.S. VICTORIA LUISE

FROM NEW YORK NOV. 15, 1912  
TO SAN FRANCISCO FEB. 1, 1913



HAMBURG AMERICAN LINE

BOSTON PHILADELPHIA PITTSBURGH CHICAGO ST. LOUIS SAN FRANCISCO

We Invite You to Help Celebrate the  
**Twenty-Fifth Anniversary**  
 of the introduction of

**"Onyx"**  **Hosiery**

TRADE MARK

which will take place on  
 Wednesday, April 17th

The Course of the "ONYX" Hosiery during this quarter of a century has been one of Uninterrupted Progress and of Unvarying Excellence, which has been appreciated by the Men and Women of this Country who have been most Loyal in their support of and Demand for the "ONYX" Brand.

In recognition of this spirit of loyalty, we are offering through your dealer, on the date mentioned, the following Special Values

**FOR WOMEN**

Women's "ONYX" Black, White and Tan Gauze, Lisle with "DUB-L" TOP and High Spliced Heel; a Very Superior Quality. Our regular 50c value which will be offered at the Anniversary Sale Price of

35c per pair, 3 for \$1.00

Women's "ONYX" Black Pure Thread Silk; Reasonable Weight; Splendid Value. One of our Representative numbers, containing all the Latest Improvements, as "DUB-L" SILK Tops, etc. Actual value \$1.50 per pair. Anniversary Sale Price

\$1.00 per pair

35c per pair, 3 for \$1.00

Men's "ONYX" Black Silk Lisle. Our Best, Most Advertised and Most Reliable 50c quality; a number which has done more to build up our Men's Hosiery than any other. For this sale in BLACK only. Never sold at less than 50c per pair. Anniversary Sale Price

35c per pair, 3 for \$1.00

Men's "ONYX" Pure Thread Silk; Black and Colors, with Lisle Sole. Finest 50c silk value ever offered. Anniversary Sale Price

35c per pair, 3 for \$1.00

Look for your dealer's announcement in the daily papers on this date, April 17th, for full particulars, and if you cannot get service at the dealer's from whom you always buy "ONYX" Hosiery, write us, and we will direct you to some dealer who can supply you.

Address Dept. Z

Wholesale  
Distributors**Lord & Taylor**

New York

# AINSLEE'S

"THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS"

*Ainslee's* has built its reputation as the ideal magazine of entertainment for cultured American readers upon the best fiction of such writers as

Eleanor Hallowell Abbott	Edgar Saltus
Robert Barr	Arthur Stringer
H. F. Prevost Battersby	Andrew Soutar
John Kendrick Bangs	Burton E. Stevenson
Thomas F. Byron	E. Temple Thurston
Grace MacGowan Cooke	Margaretta Tuttle
Richard Washburn Child	Baroness Von Hutton
George Randolph Chester	Mary Heaton Vorse
Agnes and Egerton Castle	Marie Van Vorst
Anna Alice Chapin	Mrs. Wilson Woodrow
A. Conan Doyle	Edith Wharton
Holman F. Day	Stanley J. Weyman
Caroline Duer	Harry Leon Wilson
Frank Danby	Herman Whitaker
Jacques Futrelle	Joseph G. Lincoln
May Futrelle	Jack London
Jefferey Farnol	Miriam Michelson
Parker H. Fillmore	Leonard Merrick
Mrs. Burton Harrison	George Barr McCutcheon
Anthony Hope	Harold MacCrath
O. Henry	Alice MacGowan
Marion Hill	Roy Norton
Emerson Hough	Lloyd Osbourne
Robert Hichens	E. Phillips Oppenheim
James Hopper	Emily Post
Wells Hastings	Henry G. Rowland
Kate Jordan	Morley Roberts
William J. Locke	Morgan Robertson

That it is the story rather than the name that counts with *Ainslee's* is shown by the fact that this was the first magazine in this country to recognize the merit of O. Henry, Jefferey Farnol, Joseph C. Lincoln, William J. Locke, H. F. Prevost Battersby and others who have since acquired fame. The great writers of to-morrow are appearing in *Ainslee's* to-day.

The standard of *Ainslee's* is at least as high as that of the best magazine. The price is as low as that of the ordinary magazine.

Every one can afford to buy it. No one can afford to miss it.

# AINSLEE'S

SOLD WHEREVER MAGAZINES ARE READ—READ WHEREVER MAGAZINES ARE SOLD

FIFTEEN CENTS THE COPY



Far more economical than lower priced Teas. (This has been proved by actual test per cost per cup.)

Served in exclusive clubs and at the most fashionable of "Five o'clocks," and preferred by observant American women who show due regard for digestion, calm, steady nerves and a glowing youthful complexion.

Don't mind what they tell you—add some cream with rich, pure milk for full flavor, bouquet and zest—and drink the most enjoyable of all beverages—a good cup of tea.

Vantine's Tea will not be found at all Grocers'—because there's not enough to go round—there's not enough of Vantine's Private Garden Stock to supply an unlimited demand.

R.S.V.P.

You are respectfully invited to have tea with Vantine at any time and place agreeable to your taste and convenience.  
Large, generous sample will be mailed you Free and Welcome—enough for a full family brew—you will never regret a trial, nor will you soon forget the treat. THE VANTINE BOOK will come same mail.

Address

*Vantine's*  
The Oriental Store

Broadway at 18th Street :: New York

STORES ALSO AT BOSTON AND PHILADELPHIA

## There's Rhapsody in a Tea Kettle—with Vantine's Orange Pekoe Tea

Pure, sweet and wholesome, brewed in a Vantine earthenware teapot—served in Vantine's dainty china on a Vantine Oriental bamboo tea table with yourself seated in a Vantine Oriental Hour Glass Wicker.

"Mysterious languor seems to hang  
O'er mountain, plain and rill:  
An unreality of life  
Does all the senses fill."

Tea that is good tea, nothing as refreshing or wholesome. Every day new and delighted converts say that they will never again honor the tea table with any other but

### Vantine's Aromatic Orange Pekoe

Price, \$1 per lb.

IN SEALED AIR-TIGHT PACKAGES

Physicians and dietitians favor Vantine's Tea, because of its refreshing, nourishing and vitalizing qualities.

Vantine's Orange Pekoe is a blend from five special varieties—the virgin picking from top leaves of vigorous young tea shrubs grown at great elevation.





# OSTERMOOR Mattress

Never before was the subject of mattresses so vital to the American home. It means more than comfort; it means HEALTH. Get the facts from our

**\$15.**

## 144-PAGE BOOK FREE—WRITE FOR IT

The healthiest people in the world—and the most comfortable—sleep on Ostermoor. Our method of *building* a mattress from thousands of filmy layers of cotton is the only one that produced a mattress moisture-proof, vermin-proof, dust proof, and of permanent softness. These statements are backed by the experience of thousands—the book proves all. Get it before you buy any mattress.

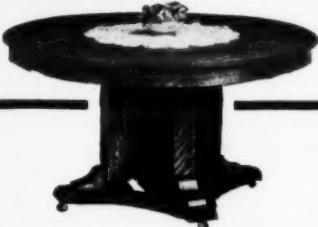
Avoid "just-as-good" imitations. The trade mark Ostermoor is your guarantee. If desired, we will ship mattress, 6 ft. 3 in. long by 4 ft. 6 in. wide, 45 pounds, express prepaid, same day we get your order. Shipped so that it reaches you in perfect condition. Money back if you want it after 30 nights' trial. Be sure to write for the book.



OSTERMOOR & CO., 174 Elizabeth Street, New York

Canadian Agency: Alaska Feather & Down Co., Ltd., Montreal

*The Ostermoor Smile*



## DEALERS SELL THIS DINING TABLE FOR \$45.00 AND IT IS WORTH IT

Constructed of the choicest quarter-sawed Oak, 54 inch top closed, 90 inch extension. Massive substantial—no furniture is better made and—

## Our Factory Price to You \$19.00

Saves You Over Half Average Retail Price.

Your money back at once if you are not satisfied—Guaranteed.

**WRITE** for our beautiful illustrated Catalogue Book now. Many more attractive pieces at equally low prices for living room, den dining room, library or bedroom. Everything shipped in complete sections. A few minutes with screw driver and it is all ready for use.

**BROOKS MANUFACTURING CO.,  
4404 Rust Avenue, Saginaw, Mich.**

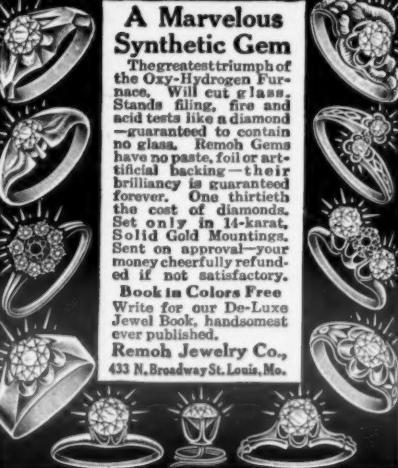
**WHITE VALLEY GEMS** IMPORTED from FRANCE

**SEE THEM BEFORE PAYING!**

These gems are chemical white sapphires—**LOOK like Diamonds.** Stand acid and fire diamond tests. So hard they easily scratch a file and will not scratch a finger nail. Sixty years old. All mounted in 14K solid gold diamond mountings. Will send you any style ring, pin or stud for examination—all charges prepaid—**no money in advance.** Write today for free illustrated booklet, special prices and ring measure. **WHITE VALLEY GEM CO., Dept. D,** 706 Saks Building, Indianapolis, Ind.

# RémohGems

NOT IMITATIONS  
LOOKS LIKE A DIAMOND  
WEARS LIKE A DIAMOND



## A Marvelous Synthetic Gem

The greatest triumph of the Oxy-Hydrogen Furnace. Will cut glass. Stands filing, fire and acid tests like a diamond—guaranteed to contain no glass. Remoh Gems have no paste, foil or artificial backing. Their brilliancy is guaranteed forever. One thirtieth the cost of diamonds. Set only in 14-karat, Solid Gold Mountings. Sent on approval—your money cheerfully refunded if not satisfactory.

**Book in Colors Free**  
Write for our De-Luxe Jewel Book, handsomest ever published.

**Remoh Jewelry Co.,**  
433 N. Broadway St. Louis, Mo.

## \$82 Saving on New Typewriter

As a result of remarkable invention, a modern, standard keyboard typewriter is now being built, in the Elliott-Fisher Billing Machine Company, with only 10 parts. Other typewriters have 100 parts. This typewriter, the **BENNETT PORTABLE**, weighs but 76 lbs. and can be readily carried in grip or pocket. Its wonderful simplicity enables us to sell it for \$18. Sold on money-back-unless-satisfied guarantee. Over 24,000 in daily use. WRITE FOR CATALOG and agents terms. **\$18** in U.S.A.

**V.P. BENNETT TYPEWRITER CO., 366 Broadway, N.Y.**

**Complete Launch With Engine \$94.50  
Ready to Run**

16, 18, 20, 22, 27, 28 and 35 footers at proportionate prices. Including Family Launches, River Boats, Auto Boats and Hunting Cabin Cruisers. We are the world's largest Power Boat Manufacturers.

**A NEW PROPOSITION TO DEMONSTRATING AGENTS**

Sixty-four different models in all sizes ready to ship, equipped with the simplest motors and steel bottom. Credit given to those who buy. No one can build can run them. Boats and engines fully guaranteed. 12,500 satisfied owners. Write today for large Free Illustrated Catalog.

**DETROIT BOAT CO., 1122 Jefferson Ave., DETROIT, MICH.**



# Stop "Making Steam" for the Other Fellow

The majority of workers are "stokers"—making "steam" to help *some other man* win success.

*Why not win success for yourself* and work your way to the top of your chosen trade or profession by sheer force of ambition? The I. C. S. can help you to do this.

If you are willing to spend a small part of your idle hours, gaining the knowledge that will put you ahead of your fellow workers, the I. C. S. will show you how. No matter where you live—how old or how young you are—what your previous education—you can become a *master* of your business.

Just mark and mail the coupon and without further obligation on your part, detailed information will be sent you telling how the I. C. S. will lead you to success.

Over 400 students each month voluntarily report an increase in salary due to I. C. S. training—why not increase *your* earning power?

**Mark and mail the coupon now.**

## INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

Box 1199 SCRANTON, PA.  
Explain, without further obligation on my part, how

I can qualify for the position before which I mark X.

Automobile Running	Civil Service
Mine Superintendent	Architect
Mine Foreman	Chemist
Plumbing, Steam Fitting	Languages
Concrete Construction	General English
Civil Engineer	Building Contractor
Textile Manufacturing	Architectural Draftsmen
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Telephone Expert	Commercial Illustrating
Mechan. Engineer	Welding
Mechanical Draftsman	Show Card Writing
Electrical Engineer	Advertising Man
Elec. Lighting Sup't.	Stenographer
Agriculture	Draftsman
Electric Railways	Salesmanship
Structural Engineers	Cotton Manufacturing
Metals, Oil, Gas Production	Woolen Manufacturing
Metal Mining	Toolmaking
English Branches	Pattern Making
Gas Engineer	Blacksmithing
Foreman Plumber	Surveyor
	Poultry Farming

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Present Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Street and No. \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Since the decision rendered by the United States Supreme Court, it has been decided by the Monks hereafter to bottle

# CHARTREUSE

(Liqueur Pères Chartreux)

both being identically the same article, under a combination label representing the old and the new labels, and in the old style of bottle bearing the Monks' familiar insignia, as shown in this advertisement.

According to the decision of the U. S. Supreme Court, handed down by Mr. Justice Hughes on May 29, 1911, no one but the Carthusian Monks (Pères Chartreux) is entitled to use the word CHARTREUSE as the name or designation of a Liqueur, so their victory in the suit against the Cusenier Company representing M. Henri Lecouturier, the Liquidator appointed by the French Courts, and his successors, the Compagnie Fermière de la Grande Chartreuse, is complete.

The Carthusian Monks (Pères Chartreux), and they alone, have the formula or recipe of the secret process employed in the manufacture of the genuine Chartreuse, and have never parted with it. There is no genuine Chartreuse save that made by them at Tarragona, Spain.

At first-class Wine Merchants, Grocers, Hotels, Cafés,  
Bätjer & Co., 45 Broadway, New York, N. Y.  
Sole Agents for the United States.



## YOU CAN BUILD THIS HANDSOME POWER BOAT

Only \$25 for knockdown frames, patterns, and instructions for this 23 footer—speed 9½ to 14 miles an hour. Everything made simple. Easy to build if you can hammer saw and screw driver. Complete in a complete knockdown boat. Or patterns alone at from \$2 to \$12 according to design. Thousands of Brooks boats in use and building now. It's fun—and profit—and summer pleasure to build a boat.

### WRITE FOR BROOKS BOAT BOOK

Today—just a postal. Mailed free. Scores of models and sizes of all kinds illustrated. Save ½ the boat builder's price. Get our offer. Address

**BROOKS MANUFACTURING CO.,**  
6204 Rust Avenue, Saginaw, Mich.

PREVENTS OBESITY.



## SANDOW MARINE ENGINE

8 h. p., 2 cylinder, \$125.00  
4 h. p., 1 cylinder, \$57.00  
2 h. p., 1 cylinder, \$39.75

Starts without cracking.  
Sale plan available.  
Interest FREE.  
Order today.  
[141]

BUILT LIKE AN AUTOMOBILE ENGINE.  
2 to 20 h. p., ready to ship; gasoline or kerosene.  
Drive boat or windmill—parts easily replaced.  
not backfire almost impossible. 2-Year  
ABSOLUTE GUARANTEE—30-Day TRIAL.  
Three moving parts—women and children  
can run it. Domestic use or for us and get yours at cost.  
Be first in territory to get off.  
Detroit Motor Car Supply Co., 25 Helen Avenue, Detroit, Mich.



1912



The YALE'S advanced and distinctive features for the new year furnish the basis for your judgment of a real 1912 motorcycle.

YALE construction shows more drop forgings than are in any other motorcycle.

You will find only in the YALE all of these new and vital marks of a 1912 motorcycle:

2 ½ in. Studded Tires. Eclipse Free Engine Clutch. Eccentric Yoke. Full High Forksides. Triple Anchored Handle-bars and Muffler Cut-Out.

Ask for detailed information about the four YALE 1912 models, ranging from 4 H. P. to 7 H. P. YALE Twin.

**THE CONSOLIDATED MFG. CO.,**  
1719 Fernwood Ave., Toledo, Ohio.

Those old Daguerreotypes of grandfather and grandmother and Aunt Mary and then the quaint pictures of father and mother taken just after the war—money couldn't buy them from *you*.

Are you forgetful of the fact that future generations would cherish just such pictures of you?

*There's a photographer in your town.*  
Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, N. Y.



# Old Dutch Cleanser

**Chases Dirt**  
Many uses and full directions  
on large Sifter-can 10c.



## Plan your trip to include a stop-over at **HOTEL CHAMBERLIN**

*At Old Point Comfort, Virginia*

**Going—Returning—North  
—South — East — West—  
On Business or Pleasure,**

spend a few days here. It will break up the monotony of your trip, rest and refresh you.

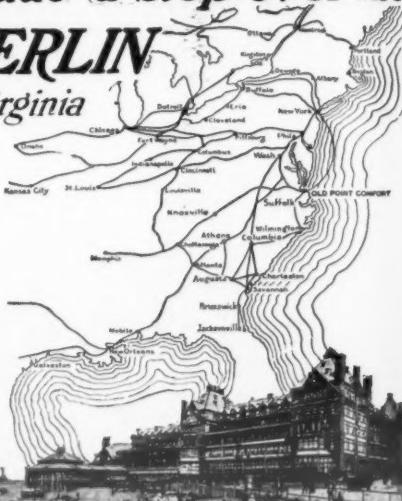
Old Point Comfort is easily accessible from all points. (Consult the map.) All railroads sell tickets with stop-over privileges.

Hotel Chamberlin is noted for its luxurious, yet homelike appointments—its unique location—right at Hampton Roads and Fortress Monroe, in the center of military and naval activities—it's historic surroundings—it's magnificent Sea Pool and Medicinal Baths, Golf, Tennis, Boating, etc. Last, but not least, its cuisine real Southern cooking, fresh oysters and sea food from nearby waters, fresh vegetables from our own gardens.

Come—enjoy rest, recreation and real Southern hospitality at this famous resort.

For further information and interesting illustrated brochures, apply at any Tourist Bureau or Transportation Office or address me personally.

GEO. F. ADAMS, Mgr., Fortress Monroe, Va.  
New York Office, 1122 Broadway



# CHENEY SILKS

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**C** wraps around the toe. It is narrowed to be comfortable.  
**D** is rubber adhesive to fasten the plaster on.

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(158)

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# Chatter Concerning Cheese

BY FRANKLIN O. KING

This World is like a Big Round Cheese, and It is Populated with all Sorts and Conditions of Humanity. Some of us are Helpful, some Harmful, but Many of Us are Merely like Mud on a Wagon Wheel—we neither Help the Wheel go Round, nor add very Much to the Appearance of Things. A Few of us Think We are the "Whole Cheese," but We're Not, and Few besides Ourselves have Inflated Ideas regarding our Importance. The Trouble with Most of Us, however, is our inability to take Life Seriously, and a Tendency to Underestimate Our Own Intrinsic Worth. More Men have Lost Out through "Cold Feet," than by Reason of "Swelled Head."

You haven't any Real Reason for being Poor, and You Know It. If you would make a *Real Stand* against Poverty, and Put up Half the Battle You are Capable of, Nothing in the World could Prevent Your final Success. To Win, however, Under Present Conditions, requires not only Tireless Industry, but the Development of a Trait most of us know very Little about—**FRUGALITY**. *Saving* is the Antidote for *Slaving*. Every Little Bit Added To What You've Got Will Some Day Buy You a House and Lot. Don't be a Jelly-fish. Cut loose from Gay Companions—Cut out a Few Habits—Cut down Expenses, and You'll Cut a better Figure with Your Friends and Family.

The Systematic Saver Accumulates slowly, unless his Savings are Put to Work where They can Earn Something Worth While. Fifteen Hundred Dollars put into the Savings Bank will, in One Year, at 3 per cent, earn You less than Fifty Dollars. Half of Fifteen Hundred Dollars invested in One of our Ten-Acre Danbury Colony Farms, in convenient Monthly Payments (Protected by Sickness and Insurance Clauses) will Earn Freedom from Care, and that Comfort which comes from the Ability to Sit under One's "Own Vine and Fig Tree," with a certain Income Insured.

*The Best Incentive to Persistent and Systematic Saving is the Desire to Get a Home.* The Best Place I know of to Get a Home is in the Rain Belt of Gulf Coast Texas, where You can Grow Three big Money-Making Crops a Year,

and where Irrigation and Fertilization do not Eat up the Profits Your Hands Create.

M. L. Mbene, who owns a farm just across Chocolate Bayou from our land, received the past season \$2300 for his six-acre strawberry crop, f. o. b. cars, Chocolate Bayou Station.

Do You Know that Growers of Figs, Strawberries and Early Vegetables clear a Net Profit of \$300 to \$500 an Acre in Gulf Coast Texas? Do You Know men have realized more than \$1,000 an acre Growing Oranges in our Country? If You Do Not know these things, you should read up on the subject, and you must not fail to get Our Free Book, which contains nearly 100 photographs of growing crops, etc.

What would you think of a little town of about 1,200 People situated near our lands, where they ship on an average of \$400,000 worth of Fruit, Vegetables, Poultry, Eggs, etc., a year? During 1910 this Community shipped nearly \$100,000 worth of Strawberries alone.

I believe You could save 25 cents a day if you Tried. I Know You would TRY if You Could Realize one-half the Opportunities offered by this Wonderfully Fertile Soil of our Danbury Colony. Remember—Our Early Vegetables get to Northern Markets in Mid-Winter and Early Spring, when they command top prices.

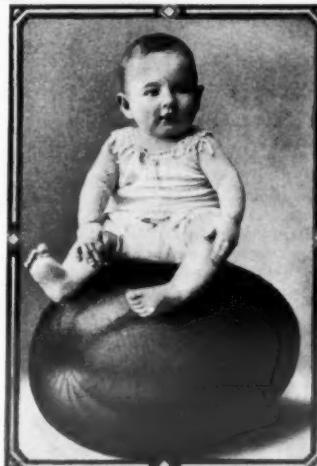
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# Baseball- That's All

*By  
John J. McGraw.  
Maj. N.Y. Giants*

FORTY thousand citizens bank about a patch of green and gray earth, breathlessly watching the efforts of a man to hit, with a small stick, the tiny, white sphere hurled at him by another man. Forty thousand citizens thunder comment on every move made by nine men in attempting to prevent one man's circuiting the gray patch, called the diamond, without allowing the tiny, white sphere to touch him. I have been asked for my idea of baseball. That is baseball.

All over the United States, in every city, town, and hamlet, identical struggles are going on, players battling, spectators commenting. Some day a "figure bug" will calculate the motive power wasted daily by the American people in applauding the players; some day he will estimate the percentage of the day devoted by the American people to watching these games, thinking of them before and discussing them afterward. Some people will be astonished

by the estimate. I hardly believe I will bat an eyelash. As manager of baseball teams, my work has been too intimately associated with figures to be astonished at anything they tell. I believe in figures. They do not lie. Baseball has reduced itself, for me, into figures—complex figures, too.

Some would have you believe the game is played in hotel lobbies, off the field, by the manager and players. No such thing. Of all the games played in all the towns through the season, no two are identical. No man can tell what the next second will turn up in a baseball game.

We'll say the Giants are battling for a pennant. They need only one game to cinch it. Their opponent for that game is Boston, the tailenders. The greatest pitcher in the world is working at the top of his form for the New Yorks. A Boston player reaches first,

*This story will be continued in the NEW STORY MAGAZINE for May, out April 5. All news stands*

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